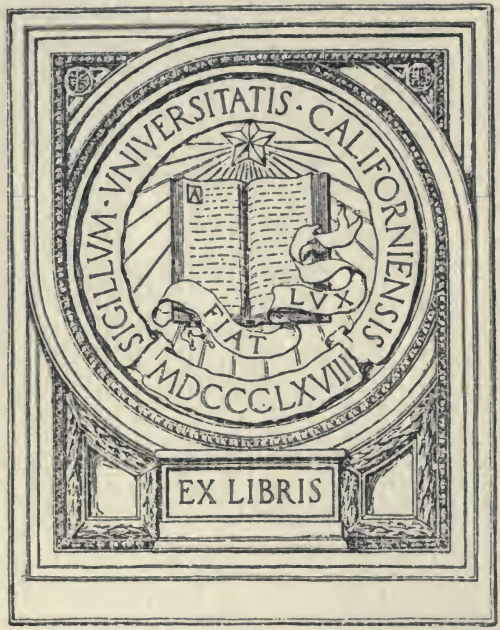
OUR CASUALTY

by

G. A. Birmingham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OUR CASUALTY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM

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OUR CASUALTY AND OTHER STORIES
THE ISLAND MYSTERY
GOSSAMER
MINNIE'S BISHOP AND OTHER STORIES
GENERAL JOHN REGAN
THE LOST TRIBES
SPANISH GOLD
LALAGE'S LOVERS
THE SEARCH PARTY
THE SIMPKINS PLOT
THE MAJOR'S NIECE
PRISCILLA'S SPIES
THE RED HAND OF ULSTER
THE ADVENTURES OF DR. WHITTY
THE SEETHING POT
THE BAD TIMES
HYACINTH
FROM DUBLIN TO CHICAGO

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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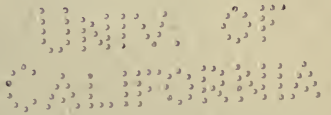
AND OTHER STORIES

BY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM

Author of "Spanish Gold," "The Island Mystery," etc.



NEW YORK

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I

OUR CASUALTY

THERE is not in the whole British Isles a more efficient military body than the Ballyhaine Veterans' Corps. The men look like soldiers when they have their grey uniforms on and their brassards on their sleeves. They talk like soldiers. They have the true military spirit. There is not a man in the company under fifty years of age, but if the Germans attempt a landing on the Ballyhaine beach, by submarine or otherwise, they will be sorry for themselves afterwards—those of them who remain alive.

Ballyhaine is a residential suburb, entirely built over with villas of the better kind. Each villa has its garden. In times of peace we discuss sweet peas or winter spinach or chrysanthemums on our way into town in the morning, travelling, as most of us do, by the 9.45 train, with season tickets, first class.

When our boys went off from us, as they all did early in the war, we felt that it was time for us to do something too. There was not the least difficulty about enrolling the men. We all joined the corps, even poor old Cotter, who must be close on seventy, and who retired from business three years ago. He used to bore us all by talking about his rheumatism, but when the Volunteer Corps was formed he dropped all that, and went about saying that he had never suffered from pain or ache in his life, and could do twenty miles a day without feeling it. We made Cotter a corporal.

Our Commanding Officer is Haines, who plays the best hand at bridge of any man in the club. He held a commission in a line regiment before he went on the Stock Exchange. That was thirty-five years ago, and it is not to be supposed that his knowledge of soldiering is up-to-date, but he is the only one of us who has any knowledge of soldiering at all, so we chose him.

The women were a difficulty at first. They insisted on regarding us as a joke, and used to repeat the absurd witticism of the street boys. I heard Janet say "Methusaleers" one day. She denied it, but I am perfectly certain she did not say "Fusiliers." My wife fussed about dry socks and wanted me to take my umbrella on a route march one wet Sunday.

Every other member of the corps had similar experiences. It was Tompkins who hit on a way of dealing satisfactorily with the women. Tompkins is our local doctor. He stays in Ballyhaine all day long when the rest of us go up to town, so he naturally knows a good deal about women. He enrolled them in a volunteer ambulance brigade, and after that they were just as keen as any of us. We did the thing handsomely for them. We bought six stretchers, a small motor ambulance waggon, and some miles of bandages. Janet and Cotter's youngest girl carried one of the stretchers. I should not like to say that my wife actually hoped I should be wounded, but I think she would have liked the chance of bandaging any other man in the corps. The rest of the women felt as she did.

The drawback to Ballyhaine as a centre of military activity is the difficulty of finding a place for practising field manœuvres. There is the golf links, of course, but we got tired of marching round and round the golf links, and we did not want to dig trenches there. Haines, who does not play golf, drew up a plan of trench digging which would have ruined the golf links for years. But we would not have that. Nor could we dig in each other's gardens, or practise advancing over open country in skirmishing order when there was no open country. The whole district is a network of

high walls with broken glass on top of them, a form of defence rendered necessary by the attacks of small boys on our fruit trees.

Fortunately, we had the sea beach. The strand —there are three miles of it—is one of the glories of Ballyhaine. We did most of our manœuvring there and dug our trenches there. Haines was opposed to this plan at first.

"If the Germans come at all," said Cotter, "they'll come from the sea. They must, this being an island."

"Of course," said Haines.

"Then," said Cotter, "the beach is the place where we shall have to meet them, and the strand is where our trenches ought to be."

There was no answering that argument. Even Haines gave way.

"With barbed wire entanglements," said Cotter, "down to the water's edge."

The weather round about Christmas-time was extraordinarily severe in Ballyhaine. We came in for a series of gales, accompanied by driving rain, and the days at that time of year are so short that most of our soldiering had to be done in the dark.

I got one cold after another, and so did every other member of the corps. Poor old Cotter limped pitifully on parade, but he did not say a word about

rheumatism. The spirit of the men was splendid, and not one of us showed a sign of shirking, though Haines kept us at it with ferocity.

Haines varied the digging by making us practise a horrible manœuvre called "relieving trenches." This was always done in the middle of the night, between twelve and one o'clock. Part of the corps went out early—about 10.30 p.m.—and manned the trenches. The rest of us marched forth at midnight and relieved them.

The worst evening we had all winter was December 8th. It was blowing terrifically from the south-east. The sea was tumbling in on the beach in enormous waves, fringing the whole line of the shore with a broad stretch of white foam. The rain swept over the country pitilessly. I came out of town by the 5.10 train, and called at the club on my way home. I found a notice posted up:

"BALLYHAINE VETERANS' CORPS.

"To-night, December the 8th, trenches will be relieved at 12 midnight. No. 1 and No. 2 Platoons to parade at 10.30, march to north end of the strand, and occupy trenches."

That meant a six-mile march for those platoons —three there and three back.

see that the company's not weakened by ill-health."

"I'm afraid," said my wife, "that Dr. Tompkins can do nothing. Mrs. Cotter was with him before she came here. The fact is that Mr. Cotter won't give in even to the doctor's orders."

I rang up Tompkins and put the case very strongly to him.

"It will simply kill Cotter," I said, "and we can't have that. He may not be of any very great military value, but he's a nice old boy, and we don't want to lose him."

Tompkins agreed with me thoroughly. He said he'd been thinking the matter over since Mrs. Cotter called on him in the afternoon, and had hit upon a plan which would meet the case.

"If only the C.O. will fall in with it," he added.

Haines is in some ways a difficult man. He likes to manage things his own way, and resents any suggestions made to him, particularly by men in the ranks. However, Cotter's life was at stake, so I undertook to tackle Haines, even at the risk of being snubbed. Tompkins explained his plan to me. I rang up Haines, and laid it before him. I put the matter very strongly to him. I even said that the War Office would probably deprive him of his command if it was discovered that he had been wasting the lives of his men unnecessarily.

"The country needs us all," I said, "even Cotter.

After all, Cotter is a non-commissioned officer and a most valuable man. Besides, it'll do the Ambulance Brigade a lot of good."

It was this last consideration which weighed most with Haines. He had felt for some time that our ambulance ladies were coming to have too good an opinion of themselves. I had the satisfaction of going back to the drawing-room and telling Janet that the stretcher bearers were to parade at eleven o'clock, and march in the rear of the column —Numbers 3 and 4 Platoons—which went to relieve trenches.

"Rot," said Janet. "We can't possibly go out on a night like this."

"C.O.'s orders," I said.

"The stretchers will be utterly ruined," she said, "not to mention our hats."

"C.O.'s orders," I said severely.

"If we must go," said Janet, "we'll take the ambulance waggon."

"No, you won't," I said. "You'll take your stretchers and carry them. Yours not to reason why, Janet. And in any case you can't take the ambulance waggon, because we're marching along the beach, and you know perfectly well that the strand is simply scored with trenches. We can't have the ambulance waggon smashed up. It's the only one we have. If a few girls break their legs

it doesn't much matter. There are too many girls about the place."

Platoons Numbers 1 and 2 marched off at 10.30 p.m. in a blinding downpour of rain. We watched them go from the porch of the golf pavilion, and promised to relieve them as quickly as we could. We paraded, according to orders, at 11 sharp, and I was glad to see that Janet and the other girls were wet and draggled long before we started.

Haines made us a short speech. He had to shout at the top of his voice because the storm was making a dreadful noise. But we heard what he said. The business of relieving trenches, he told us, would be carried out under strictly war conditions, precisely as if enemy submarines were shelling us from the sea. There would necessarily, supposing the submarines to be actually there, be casualties in our force. Haines told off four men to act as casualties. The first on the list—this was the way Tompkins' plan worked out—was Corporal Cotter.

"Corporal Cotter," said Haines, "will drop out of the ranks as the column passes the third bathing-box, numbering from the south end of the beach, Mrs. Tompkins' bathing-box, which is painted bright green."

Haines was, very properly, most particular about defining the bathing-box exactly.

"Corporal Cotter and the other casualties," said

Haines, "will take waterproof ground-sheets with them—two waterproof ground-sheets each—and keep as dry as possible. The stretcher bearers will follow the column at a distance of two hundred paces to pick up the casualties, affording first-aid on the spot, and, on reaching the field hospital, will apply restoratives under the directions of the Company's Medical Officer. For the purposes of these manœuvres, Corporal Cotter's house will be regarded as the Field Hospital."

The other three casualties, all elderly and rather delicate men, were ordered to drop out of the ranks at places further along the beach. If it was Janet's luck to reach the furthest casualty she would walk, carrying a stretcher, about a mile and a half altogether. When she got home she would be less inclined to sneer at people who catch cold in the service of their country.

The night was extremely dark. I do not think I have ever experienced a darker night. We could hear the sea roaring on our left, and could see, when we looked back, a dim glow here and there from the windows of our houses; but it was quite impossible to see anything on the beach.

I missed Cotter when we had been stumbling along for about a quarter of an hour, and felt glad that he had done his share. In a minute or so, I hoped, he would be safe on a stretcher, and half

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I missed Cotter when we had been stumbling along for about a quarter of an hour, and felt glad that he had done his share. In a minute or so, I hoped, he would be safe on a stretcher, and half

an hour later would be drinking whisky and water, hot. That, so Tompkins told me, was the restorative which was to be administered to all the casualties.

We got through the business of relieving the trenches in the end, though we had a tough struggle. The great difficulty was to find them. If Platoons Numbers 1 and 2 could have shouted to us or flashed their electric torches we should have got them much sooner than we did. But noise and light were strictly forbidden. They would, so Haines said, attract the enemy's fire, and result in our being wiped out by shrapnel.

I got separated at one time from the rest of my platoon, and walked into the sea twice. Afterwards I fell over the Company Sergeant-Major, who was sitting in a pool beside a rock. He said he had sprained his ankle. But that turned out not to be true. He had only twisted it a little, and was able to limp home. In civil life our Company Sergeant-Major is one of the directors of the Corporate Banking Company Ltd., and drives into town in his own motor.

Then I came on Haines, wandering by himself on a sandhill. He was swearing viciously. It was, indeed, the sound of his oaths which led me to him. They were not loud, but they were uttered with an intensity which gave them the power of

piercing through the tumult of the storm. He and I and the Company Sergeant-Major stuck together, and at 1 a.m.—we took the time from Haines' luminous-faced wrist watch—we suddenly tumbled into the trench.

We found the whole four platoons waiting for us; but they would not have waited much longer. The senior Second Lieutenant—a very well-known solicitor—had taken command of the company, assuming, as he said, that Haines had become a casualty accidentally. His idea was to march the men home, and then send the Ambulance Brigade to search for Haines, the Company Sergeant-Major, and me.

"That's the sort of thing," he said, "an ambulance is for. The men in the fighting line can't be expected to do it."

We marched home in pretty good order, considering that we were all very wet, greatly exhausted, and many of us bruised in various parts of our bodies. Our spirit was quite unbroken, and Haines, writing up the official diary afterwards, said that our moral was excellent. He did us no more than bare justice. There was not a man among us—except perhaps the Company Sergeant-Major, whose ankle was swelling up—who would not have welcomed a German attack.

We got back to the golf pavilion, and found the

whole place in an uproar. Women, all of them very wet, were rushing about. Tompkins was giving confused and contradictory orders to the twelve stretcher bearers, who looked cowed and miserable. Mrs. Cotter was sitting on the floor in a corner of the room crying bitterly. We got the explanation out of Tompkins at last.

Three of the casualties had, it appeared, been successfully picked up and carried home. The stretcher bearers had somehow missed Cotter. Search parties had been sent out. Tompkins himself had felt his way round each of the fifteen bathing-boxes. The nursing section of the Ambulance Brigade had waved electric torches and stable lanterns up and down the beach from the edge of the sea to the sandhills. The stretcher bearers, scourged by the remarks Tompkins made about their incompetence, had gone shouting through the storm until they were hoarse and utterly exhausted. Nothing had been seen or heard of Cotter.

Haines took charge of the situation at once. He formed up the four platoons, and marched us all back to the beach. There we assumed open order, and skirmished in a northerly direction. We were told to keep in touch with each other, and to leave no square yard of the sand unexamined. We were to go on skirmishing until we found Cotter, dead

or alive. My own idea was that if we found anything it would be his corpse.

I did my best to obey orders, but I almost immediately lost touch with everybody else. The other men, so I learnt afterwards, had the same experience. However, I had the good luck to find Cotter. He came towards me, indeed he ran into me before I saw him. He was in charge of a policeman, who held him firmly but kindly by the arm. The moment Cotter saw me he burst out:

"Tell this infernal fool that I'm not drunk," he said.

"If you're acquainted with the gentleman," said the policeman, "it would be well for you to take him home to his bed. He's not in a fit state to be out by himself."

I drove off the policeman with some difficulty, making myself personally responsible for Cotter's safety. Then I questioned the old gentleman.

"What have you been doing?" I said.

"Waiting for the ambulance. I'd be waiting still if that ass of a policeman hadn't insisted that I was drunk and dragged me away."

"Good Lord!" I said, "and they've been looking for you for hours."

"I know that," said Cotter. "I saw their lights all over the place and heard them shouting."

"Then why on earth didn't you shout back and let them know where you were?"

"Casualties don't shout," said Cotter. "They can't. They're too weak. I groaned occasionally; but I suppose they didn't hear me."

"And how long did you mean to lie out in this storm?" I said.

"Till the stretcher bearers found me," said Cotter. "Those were the C.O.'s orders."

I do not know whether any medals will be given to volunteers after the war. Cotter certainly deserves one. I have never heard a finer story of devotion to duty than his. When I had got rid of the policeman he actually wanted to go back and lie down again.

II

GETTING EVEN

THE battalion awaited its orders to embark for France. A feeling of expectation, a certain nervousness, a half-pleasurable excitement, prevailed in the officers' mess and among the men. No one thought of service in France as a picnic, or anticipated a good time in the trenches. But there was a general sense of relief that the period of training—a long, tiresome, very dull business—was over at last. Over or almost over. For the Colonel and certain remote authorities behind the Colonel believed in working the battalion hard up to the last moment. Therefore day after day there were "stunts" and "shows," field exercises of every conceivable kind. The weather was hot, as hot as weather ought to be in the first week of August. Long marches became dusty horrors to the men. Manœuvres meant hours of desperate toil. Officers thought longingly of bygone summers, of the cool shade of trees, of tennis played in white flannels, of luscious plates of strawberries and cream. The Colonel, an old soldier, went on

inventing new "stunts" and more of them. He had laboured at the training of his battalion, hammering raw boys into disciplined men, inspiring subalterns with something of his own spirit.

On the whole he had been successful. The men sweated, but grumbled very little. The officers kept up a gallant pretence at keenness. Slackness was regarded as bad form, and only one member of the mess made no secret of his opinion that the Colonel was overdoing the "spit and polish" business. This was McMahon, the medical officer; and he did not, properly speaking, belong to the battalion at all. Men and officers alike were drawn for the most part from the English midlands. McMahon was an Irishman. They were born with a sense of discipline and the Colonel worked on material responsive to his methods. McMahon, like most Irishmen, was by temperament a rebel. Yet there was no more popular officer than the Irish doctor. His frank good humour, his ready wit, his unfailing kindliness, won him affection. Even the Colonel liked him, and bore from McMahon behaviour which would have led to the sharp snubbing of anyone else.

There came a day—the 6th of August—for which the Colonel, or some higher authority, devised a "stunt" of the most intense and laborious kind. A very great and remote man, the General in com-

mand of the whole district, promised to be present and to witness the performance. Orders were issued in minute detail, and every officer was expected to be familiar with them. Maps were studied conscientiously. Field glasses were polished. Rations were served out. Kits were inspected. The affair was an attack upon a hill supposed to be strongly held by an enemy well provided with machine-guns.

A genuine excitement possessed the battalion. This, so it was felt, was very like the real thing. Just so, some day in France, would an advance be made and great glory won. McMahon alone remained cheerfully indifferent to the energetic fussiness which prevailed.

The day dawned cloudless with promise of intense heat. Very early, after a hurried and insufficient breakfast, B Company marched out. It was the business of B Company to take up a position south of the enemy's hill, to harass the foe with flanking fire and at the proper moment to rush certain machine-gun posts. B Company had some ten miles to march before reaching its appointed place. McMahon gave it as his opinion that B Company would be incapable of rushing anything when it had marched ten miles in blistering heat and had lain flat for an hour or two in a shadeless field. A party of cooks, with a travelling kitchen, followed

B Company. McMahon said that if the cooks were sensible men they would lose their way and come to a halt in a wood, not far from a stream. He added that he was himself very sensible and had already fixed on the wood, about a mile from the scene of the attack, where he intended to spend the day, with a novel.

The other three companies, the Lewis gunners, and a battery of Stokes gun men, attached to the battalion for the attack, marched out later, under the command of the Colonel himself. Cyclist scouts scoured the roads ahead of the advance. McMahon, accompanied by an orderly, marched in the rear and complained greatly of the dust. A Brigadier appeared in a motor and cast a critical eye on the men. Two officers in staff caps, understood to be umpires, rode by.

At noon, the heat being then very great, a motor cyclist dashed up, his machine snorting horribly, the man himself plastered with dust, sweat and oil. He announced that the battalion was under heavy fire from the enemy artillery and that men were falling fast. The Brigadier had sent an urgent message to that effect. The Colonel, who rather expected that something of the sort would occur, gave the orders necessary in such a situation. The men opened out into artillery formation and ad-

vanced, by a series of short rushes, to take cover in some trenches, supposed to have been abandoned, very conveniently, by the enemy the day before. The Brigadier, seated in his motor-car in a wood on a neighbouring hill, watched the operation through his field glasses, munched a sandwich, and enjoyed a glass of sherry from his flask. McMahon, for whom short rushes in artillery formation had no attractions at all, slipped through a hedge, skirted a field of ripening oats, and settled himself very comfortably under a beech tree on the edge of a small wood. His orderly followed him and laid down a large package on the grass beside the doctor. The Colonel, an enthusiastic realist, had insisted that McMahon should bring with him a supply of surgical instruments, dressings and other things necessary for dealing with wounds. McMahon opened the package. He took out a novel, a tin of tobacco, a great many packages of cigarettes, two bottles of soda water, two lemons and several parcels of food.

"This," he said to the orderly, "is the advanced dressing station. When the casualties begin to arrive, we shall be ready for them."

The Brigadier sent another motor cyclist to say that the battalion would be wiped out if it stayed where it was. He suggested a move to the right and an attempt to get into touch with B Company.

The Brigadier, though he drove in a motor-car, was feeling the heat. If a direct advance had been made on the hill from where the battalion lay he would have been obliged to drive out of his wood in order to keep the battle in view. A move to the right could be watched comfortably from where he sat. The Colonel explained the situation, not the Brigadier's feelings, to his officers, exposing himself with reckless gallantry as he passed from company to company. He said that he himself would survey the ground to the right and would try to discover the exact position of B Company.

"I shall," he said to the Adjutant, "climb a tree so as to get a good view."

The Adjutant remonstrated. He thought the Colonel was too old a man for climbing trees. He recommended that a subaltern, a Second Lieutenant whom nobody would miss much if he fell, should be sent up the tree. The suggestion, as the Adjutant might have guessed, made the Colonel more determined and slightly exasperated him.

He gave orders that the Stokes gunners should shell the enemy while he climbed the tree. The Stokes gunners did not want to shell anyone. Their weapons are awkward to handle and their ammunition very heavy. They were already as hot as any men ought to be. But they were well trained and highly disciplined. They attacked the enemy

with small dummy shells, which rose gently into the air, made a half-circle, and fell about fifteen yards from the muzzles of their guns.

The Colonel, looking about him for a tree not too difficult to climb, caught sight of the beech under which McMahon lay. It seemed exactly the kind of tree he required. It was high. Its lower branches were close to the ground. It looked strong and sound. The Colonel pushed his way through the hedge, avoided the oats, and approached the tree across a pasture field. He came on McMahon stretched flat on his back, a tumbler full of lemon squash beside him and his novel in his hand. The Colonel was still irritated by the Adjutant's suggestion that he was too old to climb trees. He was also beginning, now that he was near a tree, to wonder uneasily whether the Adjutant had not been right. He saw an opportunity of expressing his feelings at the expense of McMahon.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

McMahon, who had not seen the Colonel approach, stood up hurriedly, upsetting his lemon squash, and saluting.

"What the deuce are you doing here?" said the Colonel. "You've no business to be idling, drinking and smoking under a tree, when the battalion is in action."

"This is an advanced dressing station, sir," said McMahon. "I'm waiting for the casualties.

"That's not your duty," said the Colonel. "Your duty is to be with the men, in the firing line, ready to render first aid when required."

"Beg pardon, sir," said McMahon, "but I don't think that you're quite right in saying——"

"Do you mean to tell me," said the Colonel, "that it isn't the duty of a medical officer to accompany the men into the firing line?"

McMahon saluted again.

"According to the instructions issued by the R.A.M.C., sir," he said, "my place is in the advanced dressing station when there's only one medical officer attached to the unit in action. If there is more than one the position is, of course, quite different."

The Colonel, though a soldier of long experience, was not at all sure what instructions the R.A.M.C. authorities might have issued to their officers. And doctors are a powerful faction, given to standing together and defying anyone who attempts to interfere with them. Besides, no one, not even the strongest and healthiest of us, knows how soon he may find himself under the power of a doctor, seized with a pain or other form of discomfort which only a doctor can alleviate. It is never wise

to push things to a quarrel with any member of the R.A.M.C.

The Colonel turned away and, somewhat laboriously, climbed his tree. He was anxious, if possible, to make McMahon do a little work. It was annoying to think that this young man, horribly addicted to slacking, should be lying on his back in the shade. Yet he did not at once see his way to any plan for making McMahon run about in the heat.

It was while he scanned the position of B Company through his field glasses that an idea suddenly occurred to him. He climbed down rapidly and found McMahon standing respectfully to attention at the foot of the tree.

"You told me, I think," said the Colonel, "that this is the advanced dressing station?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that you're prepared to deal with casualties?"

"Yes, sir."

"I shall send some casualties down to you," said the Colonel.

"Yes, sir, certainly."

"I shall expect," said the Colonel, "that each man shall be properly treated, exactly as if he were really wounded, bandaged up, you know, ready for the ambulance to take him to the casualty clearing station. And a proper record must be kept for each

case. You must have a list made out for me, properly classified, with a note of the treatment adopted in each case and the nature of the injury, just as if you were going to send it to the medical officer at the casualty clearing station."

"Yes, sir."

"And it must be done properly," said the Colonel. "No shirking. No short cuts. I don't see why you shouldn't practise your job like the rest of us."

He turned away with a smile, a grim but well-satisfied smile. He intended to keep McMahon busy, very busy indeed, for the rest of the day.

McMahon lay down again after the Colonel left him. But he did not attempt to read his novel. He saw through the Colonel's plan. He was determined to defeat it if he could. He was enjoying a peaceful afternoon, and had no intention of exhausting himself bandaging up men who had nothing the matter with them or compiling long lists of imaginary injuries. After five minutes' thought he hit upon a scheme. Ten minutes later the first casualty arrived.

"Sent to the rear by the Colonel, sir," said the man. "Orders are to report to you. Shrapnel wound in the left thigh, sir."

"Left thigh?" said McMahon.

"It was the left the Colonel said, sir."

"All right," said McMahon. "Orderly!"

The orderly, who had found a comfortable couch among some bracken, roused himself and stood to attention in front of McMahon.

"Take this man round to the far side of the tree," said McMahon, "and let him lie down there flat on his back. You can give him a cigarette, He is to stay there until he gets orders to leave."

The orderly saluted. The man grinned. He was quite ready to lie under the tree without attempting to move until someone ordered him to get up.

In the course of the next ten minutes six more casualties arrived. Their injuries were of several different kinds. One man reported that his thumb had been taken off by a machine-gun bullet. Another said he had a scalp wound. A third had lost a whole leg, severed at the thigh. A fourth had a fragment of shell in his stomach. A fifth was completely blinded. A sixth was suffering from gas poisoning. McMahon's treatment never varied. Each man was given a cigarette and led off by the orderly to lie down in the shade at the far side of the tree. McMahon kept quite cool, refreshed himself occasionally with a drink of lemon squash, and smoked his pipe. He began to admire the activity of the Colonel's imagination. For two hours casualties poured in and every one had a different kind of wound. There was scarcely any part of the human body with which McMahon was

not called upon to deal. And the Colonel never once repeated himself. Before four o'clock about a third of the battalion and half of the officers were lying, very well content, in the shade under McMahon's care. Many of them were sound asleep.

The orderly was a man with a sense of military propriety. He insisted on the casualties lying in straight rows, as neatly aligned as if they were on their feet at parade in the barrack square. At last the stream of wounded grew slacker and finally ceased to flow. Between half-past four and five o'clock not a single man came to report himself wounded. McMahon, lighting a fresh pipe, congratulated himself. Either the Colonel's knowledge of anatomy was exhausted and he was unable to think of any more wounds, or the battle was over, and there was no further excuse for inventing casualties. McMahon got up and stretched himself. He handed his novel, the two empty soda-water bottles, and his tobacco tin to the orderly, and bade him pack them up.

"No cigarettes left, I suppose?" he said.

"No, sir, not one. In fact, sir, the last twenty men didn't get any. Weren't enough to go round them all, sir."

"Ah," said McMahon, "it's been an expensive afternoon for me; but I don't grudge it. Those

poor fellows wanted a smoke and a rest badly. Besides, I've had a very pleasant time, pleasant and peaceful."

He strolled round to the far side of the tree and took a look at the men who lay stretched out. One of the officers, a boy of untiring energy, complained that he was bored.

"I say, McMahon, can't I get up and go back to the mess? What's the good of my lying here all the afternoon?"

"You'll lie there," said McMahon severely, "until you get orders to go. And it may be a long time before you do. In fact, you won't be able to stir till the padre comes, and I haven't the least idea where he is. I doubt if he's out with us at all to-day."

"What the dickens has the padre got to do with it?" said the officer.

"You'll find that out in time. For the present you've nothing to do but lie still."

"But hang it all—— I say, McMahon, can't you finish off and let me go?"

"I?" said McMahon. "I've finished with you long ago. There's nothing more for me to do. The next man to take you in hand is the padre."

The orderly stood at his elbow while he spoke. He seemed a little nervous and agitated.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said. "The Colonel's just

coming, sir. He and the General. He's drove up in the General's car; and I'm afraid they're both coming here, sir."

McMahon turned. What the orderly said was perfectly true. The Colonel, and with him the General, and the two umpires in the fight, were skirting the oats and making for the little grove of trees where the casualties were.

McMahon went to meet them.

"Ah, McMahon," said the Colonel, "I've come to see how you've treated the wounded. I've brought the General with me. Casualties rather heavy, eh? Had a busy afternoon?"

The Colonel grinned. McMahon saluted respectfully.

"Got your list made out?" said the Colonel, "and your report on each case? Just hand them over to me, will you? The General would like to see them."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said McMahon, "but have you given orders for the padre to report here?"

"Padre?" said the Colonel. "What do you want the padre for?"

"The padre and a burying party, sir," said McMahon. "The fact is, sir, that the wounded all died, every one of them, on the way down from the firing line. Arrived here stone dead. I couldn't

do anything for them, sir. Dead before they got to me. I've had them laid out, if you'd like to see them, sir. It's all I could do for the poor fellows. It's the padre's job now. I understand that he keeps a register of burials, so there was no need for me to make a list, and of course I didn't attempt any treatment. It wouldn't have been any use, sir, when the men were dead."

III

A MATTER OF DISCIPLINE

O'BYRNE, the Reverend Timothy, is our padre. We call him Tim behind his back because we like him and Padre to his face because some respect is due to his profession. Mackintosh is our medical officer. The Reverend Tim used to take a special delight in teasing Mackintosh. It may have been the natural antipathy, the cat and dog feeling, which exists between parsons and doctors. I do not know.

But the padre never lost a chance of pulling the doctor's leg, and Mackintosh spent hours proving that the things which the padre says he saw could not possibly have happened. I should not like to call any padre a liar; but some of the Rev. Tim's stories were rather tall, and the doctor's scepticism always goaded him to fresh flights of imagination.

The mess was a much livelier place after the Rev. Tim joined it. Before he attached himself to us we used to wonder why God made men like Mackintosh, and what use they are in the world.

Now we know. Mackintosh exists to call out all that is best in our padre.

One night—the battalion was back resting at the time—we had an Assistant Provost Marshal as a guest. The conversation turned on the subject of deserters, and our A.P.M. told us some curious stories about the attempts made by these poor devils to escape the net of the military organization.

"The fact is," said the A.P.M., "that a deserter hasn't a dog's chance, not here in France anyway. We are bound to get him every time."

"Not every time," said the padre. "I know one who has been at large for months and you'll never lay hands on him."

The A.P.M., who did not of course know our padre, sat up and frowned.

"I don't think it's his fault that he's a deserter," said the padre. "He was forced into it. And anyway, even if I give you his name and tell you exactly where he is, you'll not arrest him."

"If he's a deserter, I will," said the A.P.M.

"No, you won't," said the padre. "Excuse my contradicting you, but when you hear the story you'll see yourself that you can't arrest the man. Mackintosh here is protecting him."

"Is it me?" said Mackintosh. "I'd like you to be careful what you're saying. In my opinion it's libellous to say that I'm protecting a deserter. I'll have you court-martialled, Mr. O'Byrne, padre

or no padre. I'll have you court-martialled if you bring any such accusation against me."

"I don't mean you personally," said O'Byrne. "I am taking you as a representative of your profession. The man I am speaking of"—he turned politely to the A.P.M.—"is under the direct protection of the Army Medical. You can't get at him."

Mackintosh bristled, to the padre's great delight. Anything in the way of an attack on the medical profession excites Mackintosh fearfully.

"Binny is the man's name," said the padre. "17932, Private Alfred Binny. He was in the Wessex, before the hospital people made a deserter of him. I will give you his address if you like, but you'll not be able to arrest him. If you try you'll have every doctor in France down on you. They back each other up through anything, don't they, Mackintosh?"

"I'd like you to understand," said Mackintosh, "that you can't be saying things like that with impunity."

"Get on with the story, padre," I said, "and don't exasperate Mackintosh."

"It was while I was attached to No. 97 General Hospital," he said. "Know No. 97, Mackintosh? No. That's a pity. It's a place which would just

suit you. Patients wakened every morning at five to have their faces washed. Discipline polished till you could see your face in it, and so many rules and regulations that you can't cross a room without tripping over one. The lists and card indexes that are kept going in that place, and the forms that are filled in! You'd glory in it, Mackintosh. But it didn't suit my temperament."

"I believe you," said Mackintosh grimly.

"It was while I was there," said the padre, "that Binny came down the line and was admitted to the hospital with a cushy wound in the fleshy part of his arm. He'd have been well in three weeks and back with his battalion in a month, if it hadn't been for the doctors. It's entirely owing to them that he's a deserter now."

"Malingered, I suppose," said Mackintosh. "Got back to England by shamming shell shock and was given his discharge. He wouldn't have pulled it off if I'd been there."

"You've guessed wrong," said the padre. "It wasn't a case of malingering. As nearly as possible it was the exact opposite. The doctors tried to make the poor fellow out much worse than he really was."

"I don't believe it," said Mackintosh.

"As a matter of fact," said the padre, "the mistake—you'll hardly deny that it was a mistake

when you hear the story—arose through too strict attention to discipline, that and the number of lists and returns that were made out. It doesn't do to rely too much on lists, and there is such a thing as overdoing discipline.

"What happened was this. One evening, when Binny had been in the hospital about a week, two orderlies came to his bed with a stretcher. They told him they were going to carry him down to the mortuary and put him into his coffin. Binny, of course, thought they were making some new kind of joke, and laughed. But the orderlies were perfectly serious. They said his name was on the list of those who had died during the day and they had no choice except to obey orders and put him into a coffin. They showed Binny the list, all nicely typed out, and there was no mistake about it. Binny's name, number, regiment, and religion were all there.

"Binny began to get indignant. He said he wasn't dead, that anyone could see he wasn't dead, and that it would be a barbarous thing to bury him. The orderlies, who were very nice fellows, admitted that Binny seemed to be alive, but they stuck to it that it was their business to carry out their orders. Into the mortuary Binny would have to go. They tried to console him by saying that the

funeral would not be till the next morning. But that did not cheer Binny much. In the end they took pity on the poor fellow and said they would go away for an hour and come back. If Binny could get the order changed they'd be very pleased to leave him where he was. It wasn't, so they explained, any pleasure to them to put Binny into a coffin.

" Binny did not get much chance during his hour's reprieve. The only person who came into the ward was a V.A.D. girl, quite a nice little girl, good-looking enough to be bullied a lot by the sister-in-charge. Binny told her about the fix he was in, and at first she thought he was raving and tried to soothe him down. In the end, to pacify him, I suppose, she went and asked the orderlies about him. She had not been out in France long, that V.A.D., and wasn't properly accustomed to things. When she found out that what Binny had told her was true, she got fearfully excited. She couldn't do anything herself, of course, but she ran off to the matron as hard as she could. The matron was a bit startled just at first, but she kept her head.

" ' Tell Private Binny,' she said, ' that if he has any complaints to make they must be made at the proper time and through the proper channels. The C.O. goes round the hospital every morning between

10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Private Binny can speak to him then.'

"'But by that time,' said the V.A.D. girl, 'the man will be buried.'

"'I can't help that,' said the matron. 'The discipline of the hospital must be maintained. It would be perfectly impossible to run a place like this if every man was allowed to make complaints at all hours of the day and to all sorts of people.'

"That V.A.D. was a plucky girl, and persistent—they sent her home afterwards in disgrace—and she talked on until the matron agreed to take a look at Binny. I think she was staggered when she saw him sitting up in bed and heard him cursing the orderlies, who had come back by that time. But she couldn't do anything. She wasn't really a bad sort of woman, and I don't suggest for a moment that she wanted to have Binny buried alive. But she had no authority. She could not alter an order. And there the thing was in black and white. However, she persuaded the orderlies to wait another half-hour. She went off and found one of the surgeons. He was a decent sort of fellow, but young, and he didn't see his way to interfering. There had been several mistakes made in that hospital, and the C.O. had been rather heavily strafed, which meant of course that everyone under him was strafed worse, on the good old principle of passing

it on. That surgeon's idea was to avoid trouble, if possible. Somebody, he said, had made a mistake, but it was too late, then, to set things right, and the best thing to do was to say nothing about it. He was sorry for Binny, but he couldn't do anything.

"When the V.A.D. girl heard that, she lost her temper. She said she'd write home and tell her father about it, and that her father was a Member of Parliament and would raise hell about it. She didn't, of course, say hell!"

"She couldn't do that," said Mackintosh. "The censor wouldn't pass a letter with a story like that in it."

"Quite right," said the padre, "and it wouldn't have been any good if her father had got the letter. He couldn't have done anything. If he'd asked a question in Parliament he'd simply have been told a lie of some kind. It was a silly sort of threat to make. The V.A.D. saw that herself and began to cry.

"That upset the surgeon so much that he went round and took a look at Binny. The man was pale by that time and in the deuce of a funk. But he wasn't in the least dead. The surgeon felt that it was a hard case, and said he'd take the risk of speaking to the C.O. about it.

"The C.O. of No. 97 General at that time was an oldish man, who suffered from suppressed gout,

which is the regular medical name for unsuppressed temper. He said emphatically that Private Binny was reported dead, marked dead, removed from the hospital books, and must stay dead. The whole system of the R.A.M.C. would break down, he said, and things would drift into chaos if dead men were allowed to come to life again whenever they chose.

"The surgeon was a plucky young fellow in his way. Remembering how pretty the V.A.D. looked when she cried, he pressed Binny's case on the C.O. The old gentleman said he might have done something two hours sooner; but the hosiptal returns had gone to the D.D.M.S. and couldn't possibly be got back again or altered. In the end, after a lot more talk about regulations and discipline, he said he'd telephone to the D.D.M.S. office and see if anything could be done. It is greatly to his credit that he did telephone, explaining the case as well as he could over a faulty wire. The staff colonel in the office was perfectly civil, but said that the returns had been forwarded by a motor dispatch rider to G.H.Q. and could not be recalled by any possibility. The C.O., who seems to have begun to realize the horrible position of Binny, asked advice as to what he ought to do. The staff colonel said he'd never come across a case of the kind before, but it seemed plain to him that Binny was dead, that is

to say, officially dead. The Chaplain's Department, he thought, might be able to do something for a man after he was dead. If not nobody could.

"That," said O'Byrne with a smile, "is where I came in. The C.O. sent for me at once."

"I suppose," said Mackintosh, "that you straightened the whole thing out without difficulty?"

Mackintosh is always irritated at a suggestion that anyone connected with the medical profession can possibly make a mistake. When irritated he is apt to attempt a kind of heavy sarcasm which O'Byrne sucks in with obvious delight.

"No," said the padre, "I couldn't straighten it out. But I did the best I could. I went to see poor Binny. He was in the mortuary by that time. I found him sitting up in his coffin crying like a child. I comforted him as well as I could."

"Poor devil," said Mackintosh. "Not that I believe a word of this story. It couldn't have happened. But you may as well go on and tell us what you did. Sang hymns to him, I suppose."

"Not at all," said the padre. "I got him something to eat and a couple of blankets. That mortuary is a cold place, and, though you mightn't think it, a coffin is draughty. Next morning I buried him."

"God bless me!" said the A.P.M. explosively.

"Do you mean to say you buried a man you knew to be alive?"

"Couldn't help it," said the padre. "It was in orders, matter of discipline, you know. Can't go back on discipline, can you, Mackintosh? I got through it as quickly as I decently could. Then I let Binny out. The graves in that cemetery are never filled in for an hour or two after the coffins are let down, so I had lots of time. Jolly glad poor Binny was to get out. He said he'd shivered all over when he heard 'The Last Post.' I had a suit of clothes for him; of course, civilian clothes."

The padre filled himself a glass of whisky and soda and lit his pipe. He looked round with a smile of triumph. Most of us applauded him. He deserved it. The story was one of his best imaginative efforts. I suppose the applause encouraged him to go further.

"I'll give you his address if you like," he said to the A.P.M. "He's working on a French farm and quite happy. But I don't see that you can possibly arrest him without getting the whole medical profession on your back. They said he was dead, you see, and, as Mackintosh will tell you, they never own up to making mistakes."

IV

THE SECOND BASS

"BE careful, Bates," said Miss Willmot; "we don't want your neck broken."

"No fear, miss," said Lance-Corporal Bates; "I'm all right."

Lance-Corporal Bates had three gold bars on the sleeve of his tunic. He might fairly be reckoned a man of courage. His position, when Miss Willmot spoke to him, demanded nerve. He stood on the top rail of the back of a chair, a feeble-looking chair. The chair was placed on a table which was inclined to wobble, because one of its legs was half an inch shorter than the other three. Sergeant O'Rorke, leaning on the table, rested most of his weight on the seat of the chair, thereby balancing Bates and preventing an upset. Miss Willmot sat on the corner of the table, so that it wobbled very little. Bates, perilously balanced, hammered a nail, the last necessary nail, into the wall through the topmost ray of a large white star. Then he crept cautiously down.

Standing beside Miss Willmot he surveyed the star.

"Looks a bit like Christmas, don't it, miss?" he said.

"The glitters on it," said Sergeant O'Rorke, "is the beautifullest that ever was seen. The diamonds on the King's Crown wouldn't be finer."

The star hung on the wall of the canteen opposite the counter. It was made of cotton wool pasted on cardboard. The wool had been supplied by a sympathetic nurse from a neighbouring hospital. It was looted from the medical stores. The frosting, which excited Sergeant O'Rorke's admiration, was done with sugar. It was Miss Nelly Davis, youngest and merriest of Miss Willmot's helpers, who suggested the sugar, when the powdered glass ordered from England failed to arrive.

"There can't be any harm in using it," she said. "What we're getting now isn't sugar at all, it is fine gravel. A stone of it wouldn't sweeten a single urn of tea."

Miss Willmot took the sugar from her stores as she accepted the looted cotton-wool, without troubling to search for excuse or justification. She was a lady of strong will. When she made up her mind that the Christmas decorations of her canteen were to be the best in France she was not likely to stick at trifling breaches of regulations.

She looked round her with an expression of justifiable satisfaction. The long hut which served as a canteen looked wonderfully gay. Underneath the white star ran an inscription done in large letters made of ivy leaves. Miss Willmot, in the course of two years' service in the canteen of a base camp, had gained some knowledge of the soldier's heart. Her inscription was calculated to make an immediate appeal. "A Merry Christmas," it ran, "And the Next in Blighty." The walls of the hut were hung round with festoons of coloured paper. Other festoons, red, blue, and green stretched across the room from wall to wall under the low ceiling. Chinese lanterns, swinging on wires, threatened the head of anyone more than six feet in height. Sergeant O'Rorke, an Irish Guardsman until a wound lamed him, now a member of the camp police force, had to dodge the Chinese lanterns when he walked about. Jam-pots and cigarette-tins, swathed in coloured paper, held bunches of holly and sprigs of mistletoe. They stood on the tables and the window sills.

But the counter was the crowning glory of the canteen. In the middle of it stood an enormous Christmas cake, sugar-covered, bedecked with flags. Round the cake, built into airy castles, were hundreds of crackers. Huge dishes, piled high with mince pies, stood in rows along the whole length of

the counter on each side of the cake. Behind them, rising to the height of five steps, was a long staircase made of packets of cigarettes.

"Sure, it's grand," said Sergeant O'Rorke; "and there isn't one only yourself, miss, who'd do all you be doing for the men."

Miss Willmot's eyes softened. They were keen, grey eyes, not often given to expressing tender feeling. At home in the old days men spoke of her as a good sport, who rode straight and played the game; but they seldom tried to make love to her. Women said she was a dear, and that it was a thousand pities she did not marry. It was no sentimental recollection of bygone Christmases which brought the look of softness into her eyes. She was thinking that next day the men for once would feast to the full in the canteen—eat, drink, smoke, without paying a penny. She knew how well they deserved all she could do for them, these men who had done so much, borne so much, who still had so much to do and bear. Miss Willmot thanked God as she stood there that she had money to spend for the men.

"Tea! tea! tea! Tea's ready. Come along, Miss Willmot."

The call came from behind the counter. Miss Nelly Davis stood there, a tall, fair girl in a long blue overall.

"I've made toast and buttered it, and Mr. Digby's waiting."

"Good evening, miss, and a happy Christmas to you," said Bates.

"If there's a happy Christmas going these times at all," said Sergeant O'Rorke, "it's yourself deserves it."

"Thank you, thank you both," said Miss Willmot. "If it hadn't been for your help I'd never have got the decorations done at all."

The men left the hut, and Miss Willmot locked the door behind them. The canteen was closed until it opened in all its glory on Christmas afternoon.

She passed through a door at the back of the counter, slipped off her overall, stained and creased after a long day's work, then she went into the kitchen.

Miss Nelly Davis was bending over a packing-case which stood in the middle of the kitchen floor. It served as a table, and she was spreading a cloth on it. In front of the stove stood a young man in uniform, wearing the badges of a fourth class Chaplain to the Forces. This was Mr. Digby. Once he had been the popular curate of St. Ethelburga's, the most fashionable of London churches. In those days Miss Willmot would have treated him with scorn. She did not care for curates.

Now he was a fellow-worker in the Camp. His waterproof hung dripping behind the kitchen door. Drops of rain ran down his gaiters. He was trying to dry the knees of his breeches before the stove. Miss Willmot greeted him warmly.

"Terrific night," he said; "rain coming down in buckets. Water running round the camp in rivers. I say, Miss Davis, you'll have to get out another cup. The Major's coming to tea."

"There isn't a fourth cup," said Miss Nelly. "You'll have to drink out of a mug."

"Right-o! Mugs hold more, anyway."

"All padres are greedy," said Miss Nelly. "What's bringing the Major here?"

"I've arranged a practice of the Christmas carols," said Digby.

"Bother your old carols," said Miss Nelly.

"Must have a practice," said Digby. "You and Miss Willmot are all right; but the Major is frightfully shaky over the bass. It won't do to break down to-morrow. By the way, Miss Willmot, there's something I want to speak to you about before the Major comes. There's——"

"Before the Major comes, Nelly," said Miss Willmot, "give me some tea. He always looks shocked when I drink four cups, so let me get through the first two before he arrives."

"I wouldn't sit there if I were you," said Digby.

"There's a drip coming through the roof just there which will get you on the back of the neck every time you lean forward."

Miss Willmot shifted the biscuit-tin. It was not easy to find a spot to put it. The roof of the kitchen leaked badly in several places.

"Look here, Miss Willmot," said Digby. "I wonder if you could do anything about this. I've just been round to the guard-room. There's a poor devil there——"

"Language! language!" said Miss Nelly.

She was on her knees beside the stove rescuing her plate of toast from danger. Drops of water were falling on it from the knees of Digby's breeches every time he moved.

"There is," said Digby, speaking with great precision, "an unfortunate man at this moment incarcerated in the cell behind the guard-room, under the stern keeping of the Provost Sergeant. I hope that way of saying it satisfies you, Miss Davis."

"For goodness' sake, don't talk Camp shop," said Miss Davis. "Let's have our tea in peace."

"Drink, I suppose," said Miss Willmot. "Why will they do it, just at Christmas, too?"

"This isn't a drunk," said Digby. "The wretched devil has been sent down here under arrest from No. 73 Hospital. He's to be court-martialled. He's only a boy, and a decent-looking

boy, too. I hate to think of his being shut up in that cell all by himself at Christmas with nobody to do anything for him."

"What can we do?" said Miss Willmot.

"*I* can't do anything, of course," said Digby, "but I thought you might."

"I don't see what I can do."

"Well, try," said Digby. "If you'd seen the poor fellow—— But you'll do something for him, won't you?"

Digby had a fine faith in Miss Willmot's power to do "something" under any circumstances. Experience strengthened his faith instead of shattering it. Had not Miss Willmot on one occasion faced and routed a medical board which tried to seize the men's recreation-room for its own purposes? And in the whole hierarchy of the Army there is no power more unassailable than that of a medical board. Had she not obtained leave for a man that he might go to see his dying mother, at a time when all leave was officially closed, pushing the application through office after office, till it reached, "noted and forwarded for your information, please," the remote General in Command of Lines of Communication? Had she not bent to her will two generals, several colonels, and once even a sergeant-major? A padre, fourth class, though he had once been curate of St. Ethelburga's,

was a feeble person. But Miss Willmot! Miss Willmot got things done, levelled entanglements of barbed red tape, captured the trenches of official persons by virtue of a quiet persistence, and—there is no denying it—because the things she wanted done were generally good things.

The Major opened the door of the kitchen. He stood for a moment on the threshold, the water dripping from his cap and running down his coat, great drops of it hanging from his white moustache. He was nearer sixty than fifty years of age. The beginning of the war found him settled very comfortably in a pleasant Worcestershire village. He had a house sufficiently large, a garden in which he grew wonderful vegetables, and a small circle of friends who liked a game of bridge in the evenings. From these surroundings he had been dug out and sent to command a base camp in France. He was a professional soldier, trained in the school of the old Army, but he had enough wisdom to realize that our new citizen soldiers require special treatment and enough human sympathy to be keenly interested in the welfare of the men. He grudged neither time nor trouble in any matter which concerned the good of the Camp. He had very early come to regard Miss Willmot as a valuable fellow-worker.

"Padre," he said, "I put it to you as a Christian

man, is this an evening on which anyone ought to be asked to practise Christmas carols?"

"Hear, hear," said Miss Nelly.

"We've only had one practice, sir," said Digby, "and I've put up notices all over the Camp that the carols will be sung to-morrow evening. It's awfully good of you to come."

"And of me," said Miss Nelly.

"You're here, in any case," said Digby. "The men are tremendously pleased, sir," he added, "that you're going to sing. They appreciate it."

"They won't appreciate it nearly so much when they hear me," said the Major. "I haven't sung a part for, I suppose, twenty years."

Christmas carols have been sung, and we may suppose practised beforehand, in odd places, amid curious surroundings. But it is doubtful whether even the records of missionaries in heathen lands tell of a choir practice so unconventional as that held on Christmas Eve in the kitchen of Miss Willmot's canteen.

The rain beat a tattoo on the corrugated iron roof. It dripped into a dozen pools on the soaking floor, it fell in drops which hissed on to the top of the stove. There was no musical instrument of any kind. The tea-tray was cleared away and laid in a corner. The Major, white-haired, lean-faced, smiling, sat on the packing-case in the middle of

the room. Miss Willmot sat on her biscuit-tin near the stove. Miss Nelly perched, with dangling feet, on a corner of the sink in which cups and dishes were washed. Digby, choir-master and conductor, stood in front of the stove.

"Now then," he said, "we'll begin with 'Nowell.' Major, here's your note—La-a-a"—he boomed out a low note. "Got it?"

"La-a-a," growled the Major.

"Miss Willmot, alto," said Digby, "la-a-a. That's right. Miss Davis, a third higher, la-a-a. My tenor is F. Here's the chord. La, la, la, la. Now, one, two, three. 'The first Nowell the angels did say——'"

The rain hammered on the roof. The Major plodded conscientiously at his bass. Miss Nelly sang a shrill treble. Digby gave the high tenor notes in shameless shouts. "Good King Wenceslas" followed, and "God rest you merry, gentlemen." Then the Major declared that he could sing no more.

"I wish you'd get another bass, padre," he said. "I'm not trying to back out, but I'm no good by myself. If I'd somebody to help me, a second bass——"

"There's nobody," said Digby. "I've scoured the whole camp looking for a man."

"If only Tommy were here," said Miss Nelly.

"Tommy has a splendid voice. And I don't see why he mightn't be here instead of stuck in that silly old hospital. He's quite well. He told me so yesterday. A bullet through the calf of the leg is nothing. Major, couldn't you get them to send Tommy over to the Camp just for to-morrow?"

The Major shook his head. He had every sympathy with Miss Nelly. He knew all about Tommy. So did Miss Willmot. So did Digby. Miss Nelly made no secret of the fact that she was engaged to be married to Tommy Collins. She was proud of the fact that he was serving as a private in the Wessex Borderers, wishing to work his way up through the ranks to the commission that he might have had for the asking. No Wessex man ever entered the canteen without being asked if he knew Private 7432 Collins, of the 8th Battalion. Every one—even the sergeant-major—had to listen to scraps read out from Tommy's letters, written in trenches or in billets. When Tommy was reported wounded, Miss Willmot had a bad day of it with an almost hysterical Nelly Davis. When the wound turned out to be nothing worse than a hole in the calf of the leg, made by a machine-gun bullet, Miss Nelly cried from sheer relief. When, by the greatest good luck in the world, Private 7432 Collins was sent down to 73 General Hospital, no more than a

mile distant from the Camp, Miss Nelly went wild with joy.

"Can't be done," said the Major. "If it were any other hospital—but the people in No. 73 don't like me."

The Major was a stickler for extreme accuracy in the filling in of all official papers. The staff of No. 73 Hospital cured its patients of their wounds, but sometimes turned them loose afterwards, insufficiently, occasionally even wrongly, described and classified. The Major invariably called attention to these mistakes.

The Major, though particular on some points, was a kindly man. He did not want to speak evil of the hospital authorities. He was also a little tired of hearing about Tommy Collins. He changed the subject abruptly.

"By the way, Miss Willmot," he said, "it's all right about the men's Christmas dinner. I spent an hour this morning strafing everybody in the cookhouse. I told them they must try to make the Yorkshire pudding. Heaven knows what it will be like?"

"If they'll only follow the receipt I gave them——" said Miss Willmot.

"*If*," said Digby. "But those cooks are rotters."

"Anyhow," said the Major, "there'll be a decent dinner. Roast beef, plum pudding, oranges, and

then all the things you have for them in the canteen. They'll not do badly, not at all badly."

He rubbed his hands together and smiled with benevolent satisfaction. He had arranged to eat his own Christmas dinner at the unholy hour of three in the afternoon. He meant to see that all went well at the men's dinner, and that their tea was sufficient. He meant to look in for an hour at the canteen festivities. He had promised to sing Christmas carols. From three to four was the only time left at which he could dine. But that thought did not spoil his satisfaction.

Digby saw, or thought he saw, his opportunity.

"There's one poor fellow in the guard-room, sir," he said. "Will he get any Christmas dinner?"

He winked at Miss Willmot as he spoke. This was the time for her to back up his charitable appeal.

"Ah," said the Major, "I'm afraid I can't do much for him. It's a serious charge, a case of a Field General Court Martial. I'm afraid there's no doubt about the facts. I'm sorry for him. He's quite young; but it's a disgraceful thing for any man to do."

The Major's face hardened. For many offences and most offenders he had some sympathy; but a man who sinned against the code of military honour had little pity to expect from the Major.

Miss Willmot looked up.

"Is it very bad?" she asked.

"One of those cases of self-wounding," said the Major. "Shot himself in the leg with his own rifle."

There are cases of this kind, a few of them. Some wretch, driven half frantic by terror, worn out with hardships, hopeless of any end of his sufferings, seeks this way out. He gains a week of rest and security in a hospital ward. Then he faces the stern judgment of a court martial, and pays the penalty.

"Poor fellow!" said Miss Willmot. "Poor boy! What he must have gone through before he did that!"

"He went through no more than any other man went through," said the Major; "but they stuck it and he shirked. There are men enough who deserve our pity, Miss Willmot. We can't afford to waste sympathy on cowards."

Miss Willmot was of another mind. For her there was a law higher even than the Major's lofty code of chivalry and honour. She had pity to spare for cowards.

The Major himself was not wholly consistent. As he rose to leave the kitchen he spoke of the prisoner again.

"He doesn't look like a man who'd do it. He looks like a gentleman. That makes it worse, of

course, much worse. All the same, he doesn't look it."

"Well?" said Digby, when the Major left.

"I can't do anything," said Miss Willmot. "In a case of this kind there's nothing to be done."

But Miss Willmot made up a little parcel before she left the canteen. There were cigarettes in it, and chocolate, and a couple of mince pies, and a large slice of cake, and some biscuits. Afterwards she acted lawlessly, offended against discipline, treated rules and regulations with contempt.

Sergeant O'Rorke was sitting in the guard-room playing patience when Miss Willmot entered. He stood up at once and saluted.

"Terrible weather, miss. I'll never say again that it rains in the County Galway. Sure, it doesn't know how. A man would have to come to France to find out what rain is."

"Sergeant," said Miss Willmot, "I want to speak to your prisoner."

Sergeant O'Rorke scratched his ear doubtfully. Miss Willmot had no right to see the prisoner. He had no right to open the door of the cell for her. They had hammered some respect for discipline into Sergeant O'Rorke when he served in the Irish Guards. But they had not hammered the Irish nature altogether out of him. He was willing to go to great lengths, to take risks in order to oblige a

friend whom he liked and respected. He had an Irishman's feeling that laws and regulations are not meant to apply to ladies like Miss Willmot.

"Did you think to ask leave of the Major, miss?" he said.

"No," said Miss Willmot, "I didn't ask anybody's leave."

"That's a pity now," said O'Rorke; "but sure the Major would never have said no if you'd have asked him."

He fitted the key into the lock and flung open the door of the cell.

"Prisoner, 'tention," he said.

Miss Willmot entered the small square room, lit by a single electric light. It was entirely bare of all furniture, save a single rug, which lay rolled up in a corner. The walls and floor were lined with sheets of zinc. A young man stood stiffly to attention in the middle of the room. Miss Willmot stared at him.

Then she turned to Sergeant O'Rorke. "Shut the door please, sergeant, and wait outside."

The young man neither stirred nor spoke.

"Tommy!" said Miss Willmot.

"7432! Private Collins, miss, 8th Wessex Borderers."

He spoke in a tone of hard, cold fury.

"Tommy," said Miss Willmot.

"Awaiting trial by Field General Court Martial on a charge of deliberately wounding himself in the leg."

"Tommy," said Miss Willmot again, "you didn't do that."

The boy broke down suddenly. The hardness and the anger vanished.

"Miss Willmot," he said, "for God's sake don't tell Nelly that I'm here."

"You didn't do it,' said Miss Willmot.

"Of course I didn't do it," he said. "There's been some infernal blunder. I didn't know what the damned idiots meant when they put me under arrest. I didn't know what the charge was till they marched me in to the C.O. here. He told me. Oh, the Army's a nice thing, I can tell you. I was expecting to get my stripe over that raid when I got hit with a bullet in my leg, and here I am charged with a coward's trick. I suppose they'll prove it. I suppose they've got what they call evidence. I only hope they'll shoot me quick and have done with it. I don't want to live."

Miss Willmot went over to the boy and took his hand. She led him to the corner of the bare room. They sat down together on the folded blanket. She talked to him quietly, sanely, kindly. For half an hour she sat there with him. Before she left, hope had come back to him.

"Don't you worry about my being here," he said. "If things are cleared up in the end I shan't mind a bit about spending a night or two in this cell. With all the things you've brought me"—the cake, chocolate, and cigarettes were spread out on the floor—"I'll have a merry Christmas, better than the trenches, anyhow. But, I say, don't tell Nelly. She might fret."

The Christmas festivities in the Camp were enormously successful. The men had cold ham for breakfast, a special treat paid for by the Major. They assembled for church parade, and Digby gave them the shortest sermon ever preached by a padre. The Major, who liked to play the piano at church service, was so startled by the abrupt conclusion of the discourse, that he started "O Come, All ye Faithful," in a key so low that no one could sing the second line. The Major pulled himself together.

"As you were," he said, and started again.

The men, thoroughly roused by the novelty of the proceedings, yelled the hymn. The dinner was all that could be hoped. Sweating cooks staggered into the dining-hall with huge dishes of meat and steaming cauldrons of potatoes. Sergeants, on that day acting as servants to the men, bore off from the carving-tables plates piled high. The Yorkshire pudding looked like gingerbread, but the men ate it. The plum pudding was heavy, solid, black.

The Major, smiling blandly, went from table to table. Miss Nelly, flushed with excitement and pleasure, laughed aloud. Only Miss Willmot looked on with grave eyes, somewhat sad. She was thinking of Tommy Collins in his cell, with the weight of an intolerable accusation hanging over him.

Later on, not even Miss Willmot had time to be thoughtful. There was a pause in the festivities for an hour or two after dinner. The men smoked, slept, or kicked at a football with spasmodic fits of energy. Then the canteen was opened. Miss Willmot's great cake was cut. The men passed in a long file in front of the counter. Miss Willmot handed each man a slice of cake. Other ladies gave crackers and mince pies. Digby, garrulous and friendly, distributed cigarettes. The Major stood at the far end of the room under the glistening white star. He was waiting for the moment to arrive at which he should make his speech, a speech sure to be received with genuine applause, for it was to be in praise of Miss Willmot. The Major did that kind of thing well. He had the proper touch, could catch the note appropriate for votes of thanks. He knew his talent, and that Christmas Day he meant to do his best.

An orderly entered the canteen, looked round it, caught sight of the Major. He pushed his way

through a crowd of laughing men who munched cake, smoked furiously, and decked each others' heads with paper caps from crackers. He reached the Major at last, and handed him a note. The Major read it and swore. Then he began to push his way towards the counter. The orderly followed him.

"Gangway," he called, "gangway, men. Make way for the Major."

Way was made at last. The Major seized Digby by the arm.

"It's a damned nuisance," he said. "I beg pardon, padre, an infernal nuisance. I've got to go to the orderly room. Those fellows in No. 3 Hospital are ringing me up. Why couldn't they keep quiet on Christmas Day? I must go though, and I may be kept. You'll have to make the speech and thank Miss Willmot."

Digby escaped making the speech in the end. Just as the distribution of cakes and mince pies had finished, when Digby was searching frantically for an opening sentence, the Major returned. He made two speeches. One was in a low voice across the counter to Miss Willmot. The other was to the men. It was all about Miss Willmot. It was beautifully phrased. But she did not hear a word of it. She was scarcely aware of the men's cheers, though the paper festoons swayed to and fro, and the

Chinese lanterns shook with the violence of the shouting. For the Major had said this to her:

"It's all right about that boy in the guard-room, the prisoner you know, who was to have been court-martialled. Some blatant idiot of an orderly sergeant mixed up two sets of papers, and put the wrong man under arrest. They're sending over the right man now. I told Sergeant O'Rorke to bring that poor boy straight here from the guard-room. Keep a bit of cake for him."

It was while the men were cheering the Major's other speech that Tommy Collins, guided by Sergeant O'Rorke, entered the canteen.

Miss Nelly saw him at once. She stretched herself across the counter to grasp his hands, upsetting the few remaining mince pies, and scattering crackers right and left. If the counter had not been so broad and high she would in all probability have kissed him.

"Oh, Tommy!" she said. "And I'd given up all hope of seeing you. This is just a perfect Christmas box. How did you get here?"

Tommy Collins looked appealingly to Miss Willmot. His eyes begged her as plainly as if words had crossed his lips not to tell the story of his arrest.

"Now you are here," said Miss Nelly, "you must help us with the carols. The Major's a perfect darling, but he can't sing bass for nuts. You'll do it, won't you? I'm singing, and so is Miss Willmot."

V

HER RIGHT

MRS. JOCELYN was generally considered a clever woman. Her husband respected her intellect. He was, and still is, Professor of Psychology in one of our younger Universities, so he could give an expert's opinion on any question of mental capacity. Her sons said she was clever. There were two young Jocelyns, Ned, a barrister, and Tom, a junior master in a public school. Ned used to give me his opinion of his mother very often.

"The mater is extraordinarily clear-headed," he would say. "If you want to see your way through a muddle, just you talk it over with her. It's an awful pity she——"

Then Ned would shrug his shoulders. He was a loyal son, and he never said in plain words what the pity was. Tom spoke in the same way.

"Dad's all right," he used to say, "European reputation and all that; but the mater has the brains of our family. If only she wouldn't——"

I agreed with both of them. Mrs. Jocelyn was

one of the cleverest women I ever met, but—well, on one subject she was an intolerable bore. That subject was Woman's Suffrage. She could not keep off it for very long, and once she started there was no stopping her. All her friends suffered. It cannot be said that she argued. She demanded, aggressively insisted on sex equality, on justice and right for women, right in every sphere of life, political right, social right, economic right, all kinds of other right.

This, of course, was in the old days before the war. Since August, 1914, most things have changed. Professor Jocelyn, indeed, still lectures on psychology, half-heartedly now, to a rapidly dwindling class of young women. But Ned Jocelyn's name is painted in black letters on a brown wooden cross at the head of a grave—one of a long row of graves—in a French cemetery. Tom is trying to learn to walk without crutches in the grounds of an English hospital. Mrs. Jocelyn is out in France, working in a canteen, working very hard. It is only occasionally now that she demands a "right;" but when she does, she demands it, so I understand, with all her old ferocious determination to get it. This is the story of how she once demanded and took a "right."

It was nearly midday, and the camp lay under a blazing sun. It was early in July, when all Eng-

land and all France were throbbing with hope, pride and terror as the news of the "Big Push" came in day by day. There was little calm, and few hearts at ease in those days, but Number 50 Convalescent Camp looked peaceful enough. It is miles from the firing line. No shells ever burst over it or near it. Only occasionally can the distant rumble of the guns be heard. A spell of dry weather had cracked the clay of the paths which divided it into rectangles. The grass was burnt and brown. The flower beds, in spite of diligent watering, looked parched. The great white tents, marquees guyed up with many ropes, shone with a blinding glare. In the strips of shade made by the fly sheets of the tents, men lay in little groups. Their tunics were unbuttoned or cast aside. They smoked and chatted, speaking slowly and briefly. Oftener they slept.

Only in one corner of the camp was there any sign of activity. Near the main entrance is the orderly room. Inside, a sweating adjutant toiled at a mass of papers on the desk before him. From time to time a sergeant entered the room, saluted, spoke sharply, received his orders, saluted and went out again. From the clerk's room next door came the sound of voices, the ceaseless clicking of a typewriter, and the frequent clamorous summons of a telephone bell. Outside, orderlies hurried, stepping

quickly in one direction or another, to the Quartermaster's stores, to the kitchen, to the wash-houses, to twenty other points in the great camp to which orders must go, and from which messages must return. The bugler stood in the verandah outside the orderly room, ready to blow his calls or strike the hours with a hammer on a suspended length of railway line. At the entrance gate, standing sharply to attention as a guardsman should, even under a blazing sun, was Private Malley, of the Irish Guards, wounded long ago, now wearing the brassard of the Military Police. He saw to it that no person unauthorized entered the camp. Above him, limp from its staff, hung the Red Cross flag, unrecognizable that day, since there was no faintest breeze to stir its folds.

Close by the flag staff is the little dressing station. Here the men in the camp, men discharged from hospital, are seen by the doctors and the period of their rest and convalescence is decided. They are marked "Fit," and go to the fighting again, or sent back and enjoy good quarters and pleasant food for a while longer. Or—best hope—marked "Blighty" and go home. This is the routine. But sometimes there is a difference. There had been a difference every day since the "Big Push" started. Outside the dressing station was a group of forty or fifty men. They lay on the ground,

most of them sound asleep. They lay in the strangest attitudes, curled up, some of them; others with arms and legs flung wide, the attitudes of men utterly exhausted, whose overpowering need is rest. Some sat huddled up, too tired to sleep, blinking their eyes in the strong sunshine. Most of these men wore bandages. Bandages were on their heads, their hands, their arms and legs, where sleeves and trousers had been cut away. Some of them had lost their caps. One here and there had lost a boot. Many of them wore tattered tunics and trousers with long rents in them. All of them were covered with mud, mud that had dried into hard yellow cakes. These were men sent straight down from the field dressing stations, men who had been slightly wounded, so slightly that there was no need for them to go to hospital. Among them there was one man who neither lay huddled nor sprawled. He sat upright, his knees drawn up to his chest, held tight in his clasped hands. He stared straight in front of him with wide, unblinking eyes. Of all the men in the group, he was the muddiest. His clothes were caked with mud. His face was covered with mud. His hair was matted with mud. Also his clothes were the raggedest of all. The left leg of his trousers was rent from knee to waistband. The skin of his thigh shone white, strangely white compared to his face

and hands, through the jagged tear. The sleeves of his tunic were torn. There was a hole in the back of it, and one of his shoulder straps was torn off. He was no more than a boy, youthful-looking compared even to the men, almost all of them young, who lay around him. He had a narrow face with that look of alert impudence which is common on the faces of gutter snipes in large cities.

As he sat staring he spoke now and then, spoke to himself, for there was no one to listen to him.

"We beat them," he said once. "We gave them the damnedest beating. We strafed them proper, and they ran. The Prussian Guards they was."

His accent betrayed him. He must have come from Lancashire, from some grimy Lancashire town, from Warrington or Bolton, from Liverpool itself perhaps, or Manchester. Before the war there were crowds of such boys there. They made up the football crowds on Saturday afternoons. They made the countryside hideous on bank holiday afternoons. They were the despair of church and chapel, of the social reformer, and often of the police. This boy was under-sized, of poor chest development, thin-limbed, weedy; but there was a curious light in those staring eyes of his.

He turned to the man on his right, a great, heavy-jawed Irishman with a bandaged knee, who was sound asleep.

"Wake up, Pat," he says, "wake up till I tell you how we strafed Fritz. Out in the open it was, the Prussian Guards."

But the Irishman slept on. Neither shaking nor shouting roused a sign of intelligence in him. The boy turned to the man on his left, a Canadian, an older man with a gentle, worn face. Perhaps because he was older or more utterly wearied out, or in pain this man waked and raised himself on one elbow.

"We went for them proper," said the boy. "Prussians they was and Guards. They thought they'd walk over us; but by God we talked to them, talked to them with the bayonet, we did."

A slow smile played across the Canadian's face.

"Say, Tommy," he said, "what's your name?"

"Wakeman, Private Wakeman, No. 79362. Gosh, Canada, but we handled them and they ran."

"They certainly did run some," said the Canadian slowly.

Then Wakeman poured out his story, a wonderful story, told in jerky sentences, garnished with blasphemies and obscene words. He had been a member of the Lewis Gun team. Very early in the advance the bursting of a high explosive shell had buried him, buried the whole gun team with its officer, buried the gun. Wakeman and three other men and the officer had crawled out from

the mud and débris. Somehow they had unearthed the gun. Driven on by a kind of frenzy, they had advanced again, halting, firing a drum of cartridges, advancing again. Once more a shell caught them and buried them. Once more Wakeman crawled out, clawed his way out with hooked fingers, bit the loose clay with his mouth, bored through it with his head, dug at it with his toes. This time he and the officer were alone. They struggled to recover their gun, working fiercely, till a bullet hit the officer. After that Wakeman went on by himself, managed somehow to get among the men of the company to which his gun team belonged, and possessed himself of a rifle. At that point his story became incoherent. But about one thing he was clear. He and the others of his company had met in straight hand to hand fighting the proudest troops of Germany. By stabbing, lunging, battering with clubbed rifles, they had put the Prussian Guard to flight.

"Well," drawled the Canadian, "they did run. They certainly did run some. And what's the matter with you, sonny? Hit?"

"Buried," said Wakeman, "buried twice, and shrapnel in my leg, little bits."

The bits were little, but there were a good many of them. Half an hour later Wakeman passed into the dressing station in his turn. The doctor looked him over, scribbled a word or two on the label which

hung from the lad's breast pocket, and patted him on the shoulder.

"You'll be all right, my boy," he said. "No shell shock. No D.A.H. Get along with you. Feeling a bit hungry, eh?"

"Thank you, sir," said Wakeman. "Yes, sir, feel as if I could do with a bit of something to eat. The way of it was this, sir. We strafed them proper, we did. The Prussian Guards they was, and——"

But the doctor had no time to listen to the story. "Get along now. Get along. The sooner the dressing is done, the sooner you'll get your dinner."

The story, which the doctor would not hear, bubbled out into the ears of the nursing sister who picked the scraps of shrapnel out of Wakeman's leg. They were tiny fragments, most of them, but there were a great many, and it took the nurse twenty minutes to get through her job. The story was told twice over in jerks and snatches, just as it had been told to the Canadian, only the obscene words were unuttered and the oaths, when they slipped out now and then, were followed by apologies. Every soldier, even a Lancashire gutter snipe, has in him this curious instinct. His talk is commonly full of blasphemies and obscenities, devoid of all sense or meaning, efforts at futile emphasis, apparently necessary and inevitable. But if there is a woman

within earshot, no such words pass his lips. A girl might sit all day among these men, and, if they knew she was there, her ears would never be sullied with the sound of a foul word.

Released at last from the dressing station, Wakeman and five or six others were taken to the bath-house. The corporal who led the way, the bath orderly who provided soap and towels, and the wounded Irishman who was given the bath next to Wakeman's, all heard scraps of the story, learnt the essential fact that Wakeman and his pals had strafed the Prussian Guard. It was the Irishman who reduced the excited boy to silence for a few minutes.

"What do you want to be talking that way for?" he said. "Didn't we all give them hell? Didn't I bring back three prisoners myself. Three? It's five I would have had, only for a stray shell that bursted alongside of the communication trench and lifted two of them off me. Bad luck to that same shell, for a bit of it took me under the knee. But what matter? Only, mind this, what you did to the Prussian Guard wasn't in it with what that shell did to them two Boches. You'd have been sorry for the blighters, so you would, if so be you could have found a bit of either of them big enough to be sorry for."

Wakeman had no reply to make to that. It is

not possible with a bayonet, or even with a Lewis gun, to cause the total disappearance of an enemy's body.

After his bath, with a clean shirt on him and a clean pair of socks, Wakeman dined. There is no lack of good food in Number 50 Convalescent Camp, and men recovering from wounds often have healthy appetites. But Wakeman ate, gorged himself, to the astonishment even of the kitchen orderlies. Plateful after plateful of stewed meat and potatoes, steaming and savoury, disappeared. Yet there was no sign about the boy of the lassitude of repletion. His eyes remained bright and glanced rapidly here and there. His body was still alert, the movements of his hands quick and decisive.

After dinner, rest. Wakeman found himself with other new-comers in a tent in the corner of the camp. The Irishman was there, still lamenting in picturesque phrases the loss of his two prisoners.

"And the biggest of them—a fine figure of a man he was—had the beautifullest helmet on him that ever was seen; worth twenty francs it was, any day, and me without a penny in my pocket. But where was it after the shell bursted? Tell me that if you can."

The Canadian was there, patiently ready to listen to any story, having apparently no story of his own to tell. Wakeman began again.

"It was the Prussian Guard," he said, "and we gave them proper hell, we did, out in the open. No blasted machine guns. Just them and us with the bayonet. And——"

He talked in vain. In the tent were beds, real beds with mattresses of woven wire, and palliasses stuffed with straw. Stretched flat on his back the Irishman snored. His head pillowed on his folded arm the Canadian slept peacefully, a quiet smile, like a child's, on his face. Wakeman looked at them and snorted with contempt. For him no sleep was possible. He pulled a bench to the door of the tent, and sat in the sunshine. He found the lid of a cigarette tin and set to work to scrape the mud off his clothes and boots. But the work wearied him. With a piece of string he laced up the long rent in his trousers, cutting holes in the material with the blade of a knife. Then, still obstinately disinclined for sleep, he went out to explore the camp.

At one end of the camp is a hut, a long, low building. It is one of those canteens and recreation huts, which, working through various organizations, the public at home provides for the men in France. They are familiar enough to everyone in France, and the men know that there is a welcome for them however often they pass the doors. In this hut Mrs. Jocelyn works all day long and every day.

Sometimes she cooks, making vast puddings, stewing cauldrons full of prunes or figs. Sometimes she stands behind the counter serving bowls of tea, coffee, cocoa, lemonade, to thirsty men. Sometimes, half asphyxiated with tobacco smoke, she sits at the piano and hammers out rag-time tunes, while the men crowd round her, their faces close to her as they peer at the music, their voices threatening her with deafness when they bellow in her ears. Sometimes she sits for an hour beside some dull-eyed victim of shell shock, patiently trying to coax or trick him back to some interest in life again, giving him, literally, her own vitality, until, "virtue gone out" of her, she must seek fresh strength for herself in the less exhausting toil of a scullery maid. Thus she pays to man the debt she owes to God for the cross over the grave of one son dead, and the unconquerable spirit of the other crippled.

It was a slack hour when Private Wakeman, in his grotesquely tattered clothes, limped through the door. Only a few men were in the hut, writing or playing draughts. A boy at the piano was laboriously beating out a discordant version of "Tennessee." Mrs. Jocelyn sat on a packing-case, a block of paper on her knee, writing a letter to a man who had left the camp to go up the line again. Another woman, a fellow worker, was arranging plates of

cakes and biscuits on the counter, piling bowls ready to hand for the crowd of men who would come later, clamouring for tea.

Private Wakeman stood in the middle of the hut and looked around him. He sought companionship, longed to find some one to whom he could tell his story and make his boast about the Prussian Guard. His eyes wandered from one to another of the men who were writing or playing games. He found little encouragement. It seemed impossible to join himself to any one of them. He looked at the lady busy with the bowls and plates. His eyes rested at last on a great dish of stewed figs which stood on the counter. He had eaten an incredible quantity of food in the dining-hall two hours before, soup, beef, potatoes, cabbage, pudding, cheese. But he had not eaten stewed figs. His whole boy's nature rose in him in one fierce longing for stewed figs. He remembered. Before he went into the attack he had possessed half a franc and two sous. He thrust his hand into his one trouser pocket. It was empty. He tore at the string with which he had laced up the slit in his trousers. On that side there was not a pocket left. It, and all it ever contained, were gone. He fumbled in the pockets of his tunic, found three mangled cigarettes, the stump of a pencil, a letter from his mother, and, at last, two English penny stamps, sur-

vivals of days which seemed years ago, when he had been in camp in England.

His eyes were fixed on the stewed figs. The longing in him grew fiercer, intolerable. He approached the counter slowly. He laid on it the two stamps, dirty almost beyond recognition. He smoothed them out carefully.

"Lady," he said, "I haven't got no money but——"

The worker laid down her bowls, looked at the two stamps, and then at the boy. She was a woman of experience and discernment. She saw the muddy, tattered clothes. She read the look of desire in the eyes. She understood.

"What do you want?" she said.

"Stewed fruit, lady, and—and custard."

She turned from the boy to Mrs. Jocelyn.

"It's clean against all rules," she said. "I know I oughtn't to, but I must—I simply must give this boy something."

Mrs. Jocelyn looked up from her writing. She saw all that the other had seen. She had talked with many men. One glance was enough for her. She knew what the boy had been through. With swift intuition she guessed at what he felt and how he yearned. She saw the name of his regiment on his one remaining shoulder strap. It was her dead boy's regiment, and every man in it was dear

to her. Already the other lady was at work, putting a spoonful of stewed figs on a soup plate. Mrs. Jocelyn seized her by the arm and dragged her roughly back from the counter.

"Don't dare to do it," she said, "it's my right. No one else has so good a right to do it as I have."

So Private Wakeman sat down to a plate piled with stewed figs, swamped with a yellowish liquid called custard in canteens in France. Beside him were jam tarts and great slabs of cake. From a mouth never empty, though he swallowed fast, came in short gushes the story of the strafing of the Prussian Guard, told at last to ears which drank in greedily every word of it.

So Mrs. Jocelyn claimed and took at last her dearest right.

VI

JOURNEY'S END

I HAD a long journey before me, and I looked forward to it with dread. It is my habit when forced to travel in France, the part of France chiefly affected by the war, to resign myself to a period of misery. I relapse into a condition of sulky torpor. Railway Transport Offices may amuse themselves by putting me into wrong trains. Officers in command of trains may detach the carriage in which I am and leave it for hours in a siding. My luggage may be—and generally is—hopelessly lost. I may arrive at my destination faint for want of food. But I bear all these things without protest or complaint. This is not because I am particularly virtuous or self-trained to turn the other cheek to the smiter. I am morally feeble, deficient in power of self-defence, a lover of peace with discomfort, rather than honourable strife.

I felt no small joy when I discovered that Thompson was to be my travelling companion on this particular journey. I had travelled with Thompson before. I knew that he always secured food, that he never lost his luggage, that he had an instinct

for recognizing the right train when he saw it, and that he had a healthy disregard for the dignity of the official persons who clog the feet of wayfarers in France.

We met at the station. Thompson's breezy good humour gave me fresh confidence at once. He looked energetic, hopeful and charged with vitality.

"Come along," he said, "we'll report to the R.T.O. at once and get it over."

In France under existing conditions the traveller reports to the Railway Transport Officer when he starts his journey, when he finishes it and at all intervening opportunities. An R.T.O. must lead a harassed and distressful life. He sees to it that the traveller has a fair share of life's trouble.

This particular R.T.O. began by trying to get us into a wrong train. I suppose that was the line of least resistance for him. It was easier to put us into the first train that came along. We should have been off his hands, and another R.T.O stationed somewhere else, would have had the job of getting us switched back on to our proper track again. The first man—and this was all he cared for—would have been rid of us. Thompson was equal to the situation. He talked vigorously to that R.T.O. Thompson holds no very exalted rank in the army. I often wonder he is not tried by Court Martial for the things he says. But the R.T.O., so

far from resenting Thompson's remarks, offered us a sort of apology.

"I've been on duty ten hours," he said, "and there's a whole battery of artillery lost somewhere along the line. It never was my fault; but every general in the whole army has been ringing me up about it. The telephone bell hasn't stopped all day. Damn! There it is again."

It was; loud, angry and horribly persistent. Even Thompson felt sorry for the R.T.O.

"Never mind," he said, "you'll get your Military Cross all right in the end. All you fellows do. Now buck up a bit and find our train for us. It's X. we want to get to."

I mention this incident to show the kind of man Thompson is and his way of dealing with difficulties. Under his care I felt that I should travel safely and get to X. in the end. Comfort was not to be expected, but Thompson did all that could be done to mitigate our misery.

We made our start from a platform blocked with piles of officers' luggage and crowded with confused and anxious men. Subalterns in charge of drafts asked other subalterns what they ought to do and received counter inquiries by way of reply. Sergeants stormed blasphemously at men who had disappeared in search of tea. Staff officers, red tabbed and glorious, tried to preserve an appear-

ance of dignity while their own servants staggering under the weight of kit bags, bumped into them. Hilarious men, going home on leave, shouted sudden snatches of song. A decrepit Frenchman, patient in the performance of duty, blew feeble blasts on a small horn. Thompson, alert and competent, found a compartment. He put me in and then he bundled in my valise. After that he found his own luggage, an enormous kit bag, two sacks, a camp bedstead, a hammock chair and a number of small parcels.

"Get them in somehow," he said. "We'll settle down afterwards."

Thompson did the settling afterwards. He so arranged our belongings that we each had a seat. The door by which anyone else might have to get in at another station was hopelessly blocked. The small parcels were put on the rack above our heads. Thompson gave me a list of their contents as he put them in their places. They contained bread, butter, meat, biscuits, cheese, a bottle of wine and a flask of brandy.

"We're here till two o'clock to-morrow morning —till two o'clock at best. We must have something to eat."

A selfish traveller—I am profoundly selfish—would have been content to keep that compartment secure from intrusion. We had completely barri-

caded the door and no one could have got in if we had chosen to defend our position. But Thompson was not selfish. The train stopped at a station every quarter of an hour or so, and Thompson, climbing up the barricade, opened the window and took a look out every time we stopped. At one station—it was then about 7 p.m. and quite dark—he discovered a forlorn boy—a second-lieutenant—who was trying to find room for himself and his belongings. Thompson hailed him. The next five minutes were passed in fierce toil by all of us. But before the train started Thompson got the boy and his belongings into our compartment. In my opinion no second-lieutenants ought to be allowed to possess a suit-case as well as a valise. This boy also had three top-coats and a Jaeger rug. We spent nearly half an hour settling down again after that.

Then we dined, sharing the food—Thompson's food—with the second-lieutenant. He was a nice boy and very grateful. I thought him a little garrulous, but Thompson encouraged him to talk. He told us all about his job. It was his duty to go up in captive balloons and send down messages to the artillery. It was, by his account, a seasicky business, worse by several degrees than crossing the Channel in the leave boat. Thompson, who has a thirst for every kind of information, questioned and cross-questioned the boy. After dinner—din-

ner was Thompson's name for our meal—I prepared to go to sleep. Thompson arranged valises on the floor in such a way that I could stretch my legs. The boy went on talking. He told Thompson that he had dropped out of the ballooning business and that he was going to X. to submit to a special course of training. I forget what it was, bombing probably, or the use of trench mortars, possibly map reading or—a subject part of the school curriculum of our grandmothers—the use of globes. The army has a passion for imparting knowledge of any kind to temporary lieutenants. I went to sleep while Thompson was explaining just where the boy's particular course of instruction was given, a camp some three or four miles out of X. Thompson has an amazing knowledge of what naturalists would call the habitat of the various parts of the army.

At 3 a.m. I was awakened from my sleep. We had reached, an hour late, the junction at which we had to change. Thompson and the boy were both alert and cheerful. They had, I fancy, been talking all the time. Our junction proved to be a desolate, windswept platform, without a sign of shelter of any kind except a bleak-looking cabin, the habitation of the local R.T.O. Thompson roused him ruthlessly and learned that, with luck, we might expect our next train to start at six. I

shivered. Three hours, the very coldest in the twenty-four, on that platform, did not strike me as a pleasant prospect. Thompson used a favourite phrase of his.

"After all," he said, "it's war; what the French call *La Guerre*." He professed to have discovered, not from the R.T.O. but from a sleepy French railway official, that the train, our train in which we were to travel, was somewhere in the neighbourhood, waiting for its engine. It did not come to us from anywhere else; but made its start, so to speak took its rise, at that junction. Thompson and our new friend, the boy, proposed to get into the train when they found it.

Thompson can speak French of a sort, but he does not understand the language as spoken by the French people. I did not believe that he had really found out about that train. I declined to join in the search. He and the boy went off together. They came back in about half an hour. They said they had found a train standing by itself in a field and that it must be ours because there was no other. The reasoning did not seem conclusive to me, but I agreed to go and sleep in whatever train they had found. I suggested that we should leave our luggage on the platform and pick it up when the train got there at 6 a.m.

"That," said Thompson, "is just the way lug-

gage gets lost. Suppose—I don't say it's likely or even possible—but suppose the train we get into goes somewhere else. Nice fools we'd look, turning up in Paris or Marseilles without a brush or comb among us. No. Where I go I take my luggage with me."

Thompson was evidently not so sure about that train as he pretended to be. But I had reached a pitch of hopeless misery which left me indifferent about the future. It did not seem to me to matter much just then whether I ever got to X. or not. We had to make three trips, stumbling over railway lines and sleepers, in the dark, falling into wet ditches and slipping on muddy banks; but in the end we got all our luggage, including the boy's top-coats, into a train which lay lifeless and deserted in a siding.

This time Thompson and the boy slept. I sat up stiff with cold. At half-past five a French railway porter opened our door and invited us to descend, alleging that he wanted to clean the carriage. I was quite pleased to wake Thompson who was snoring.

"Get up," I said, "there's a man here who wants to clean the carriage and we've got to get out."

"I'm damned if I get out," said Thompson.

The Frenchman repeated his request most politely. If the gentlemen would be good enough

to descend he would at once clean the carriage.

Thompson fumbled in his pocket and got out an electric torch. At first I thought he meant to make sure that the carriage required cleaning. Thinking things over I came to the conclusion that he felt he could talk French better if he could see a little. He turned his ray of light on the Frenchman and said slowly and distinctly:

"Nous sommes officiers anglais, et les officiers anglais ne descendent pas—jamais."

The Frenchman blinked uncertainly. Thompson added:

"Jamais de ma vie."

That settled the French porter. He was face to face with one of the national idiosyncrasies of the English, a new one to him and incomprehensible, but he submitted at once to the inevitable. He gave up all idea of cleaning the carriage and Thompson went to sleep again. The boy slept soundly through the whole business.

At half-past seven—the train had been jogging along since six—Thompson woke and said he thought he'd better shave. The proposal struck me as absurd.

"We can't possibly shave," I said, "without water."

Thompson was quite equal to that difficulty. The

next time the train stopped—it stopped every ten minutes or so—he hopped out with a folding drinking cup in his hand. He returned with the cup full of hot water. He had got it from the engine driver. He and I shaved. The boy still slept, but, as Thompson pointed out, that did not matter. He was too young to require much shaving.

"Nice boy that," said Thompson. "Son of an archdeacon; was at Cambridge when the war broke out. Carries a photo of his mother about with him. Only nice boys carry photos of their mothers. He has it in a little khaki-coloured case along with one of the girl he's going to marry—quite a pretty girl with tously hair and large eyes."

"Oh, he's engaged to be married, is he?"

"Of course he is. That sort of boy is sure to be. Just look at him."

As he lay there asleep his face looked extraordinarily young and innocent. I admitted that he was just the sort of boy who would get engaged to the first girl who took him seriously.

"Girl's out here nursing," said Thompson. "V.A.D. Evidently has a strong sense of duty or she wouldn't be doing it. V.A.D.-ing isn't precisely a cushy job. He's tremendously in love."

"Seems to have confided most of his affairs in you," I said.

"Told me," said Thompson, "that the girl has just been home on leave. He hoped to get back, too, to meet her, thinks he would have got a week if he hadn't been ordered off on this course, bombing or whatever it is."

Thompson washed while he talked. It could scarcely be called a real wash, but he soaped his face, most of his neck and his ears with his shaving brush and then dipped his handkerchief in the drinking cup and wiped the soap off. He was certainly cleaner afterwards; but I felt that what was left of the water would not clean me.

Later on Thompson secured some rolls of bread, two jam pastries and six apples. The bread and pastry I think he bought. The apples I am nearly sure he looted. I saw a large basket of apples in one of the waggons of a train which was standing in the station at which Thompson got out to buy our breakfast. They were exactly like the apples he brought back.

We woke up the boy then. It did not matter whether he shaved or not; but at his age it is a serious thing to miss a chance of food.

About midday we arrived at a large town. Thompson learned from the R.T.O. who inhabited the railway station there that we could not get a train to take us any further till ten o'clock that night. He said again that was war, what the

French call *guerre,* but he seemed quite pleased at the prospect of the wait. He spoke of looking for a proper meal and a Turkish bath. The bath we did not succeed in getting; but we had an excellent luncheon: omelette, fried fish, some kind of stewed meat and a bottle of red wine. The boy stuck to us and told us a lot more about his girl. His great hope, he said, was that he would meet her somewhere in France. I could see that what he really looked forward to was a wound of a moderately painful kind which would necessitate a long residence, as a patient, in her hospital. He was, as Thompson said, a nice boy; but he talked too much about the girl. He was also a well-educated boy and anxious to make the best of any opportunities which came his way. He told us that there was an interesting cathedral in the town and proposed that we should all go and see it after lunch. Thompson is not an irreligious man. Nor am I. We both go to church regularly, though not to excess, but we do not either of us care for spending week day afternoons in a cathedral. Thompson still hankered after a Turkish bath. I had a plan for getting a bedroom somewhere and going to sleep. We sent the boy off to the cathedral by himself.

The Turkish bath, as I said, was unobtainable. We walked through most of the streets of that

town looking for it. Then Thompson proposed that we should have afternoon tea. That we got in a small room above a pastry cook's shop. The girl who served us brought us tea and a large assortment of sticky pastry. Thompson hates sticky pastry. There is only one kind of cake made in France which he will eat. I knew what it was, for I had often had tea with Thompson before. I should have recognized one if I had seen it; but I could not remember the French name for it. Thompson insisted on describing its appearance to the girl. He gave his description in English and the girl looked puzzled. I tried to translate what he said into French and she looked still more puzzled.

Then from the far corner of the room came a pleasant voice.

"I think *brioche* is the word you want."

It was. I recollected it directly I heard it. I turned to thank our interpreter. She was a young woman in the uniform of a V.A.D. She was sitting at a table by herself, was, in fact, the only other occupant of the room. I thanked her. Thompson joined in and thanked her effusively. There was not much light in the room and her corner was decidedly gloomy. Still, it was possible to see that she was a decidedly pretty girl. We both said that if there was anything we could do for her we should be very pleased to do it. After the way

she helped us out with the *brioche* we could scarcely say less.

"Perhaps," she said, "you may be able to tell me when I will be able to get a train to——?"

She mentioned one of those towns of which the English have taken temporary possession, turning the hotels into hospitals, to the great profit of the original proprietors.

"Certainly," said Thompson. "There's a train at 9 p.m. But you'll be travelling all night in that. If I were you I'd stay here till to-morrow morning and then——"

"Can't," said the girl. "Properly speaking I'm due back to-day; but I missed the early train this morning and only got here an hour ago. The boat was horribly late."

"Ah," said Thompson, "you're coming back after leave, I suppose."

The girl sighed faintly.

"Yes," she said, "but I've had a fortnight's leave; I can't complain."

"I'll just write down that train for you," said Thompson.

He scribbled 9 p.m. on a piece of paper and carried it over to the girl. It seemed to me an unnecessary thing to do. Nine is a simple number, easy to remember. Some thought of the same kind occurred to the girl. She looked at Thompson,

first with some surprise, and then, I thought, rather coldly. She was evidently not inclined to accept any further friendly offers from Thompson. He did not seem in the least abashed even when she turned her shoulder to us and looked the other way.

"Have you seen the cathedral here?" said Thompson.

The girl made no answer.

"I really think," said Thompson, "that you ought to pay a visit to the cathedral. You'll like it, you really will. And you've got hours before you. I don't see how you can fill in the time if you don't go to the cathedral."

"Thank you," said the girl without turning round.

"I'm not going there," said Thompson, "or I'd offer to show you the way. But you can't miss it. You can see the spire from the window. It's the finest specimen of early Gothic in the north of France. The glass is superb. There's an altar piece by Raphael or Botticelli, I forget which. The screen is late Italian Renaissance, and there's a tomb in the west transept which is supposed to be that of the Venerable Bede."

The girl got up and walked out of the room. I was not surprised.

"Thompson," I said, "what do you mean by behaving like a cad? Any one could see that she

is a nice girl; a lady, not that sort at all."

Thompson grinned.

"And as for that rigmarole of yours about the cathedral—what the devil do you know about Italian Renaissance, or Botticelli or early Gothic? I never heard such rot in my life. As a matter of fact I've always heard that the glass in this cathedral is poor."

"All the same," said Thompson, "if she goes there she'll be pleased. She'll find something she'll like a great deal better than stained glass."

"As for the Venerable Bede," I said, "he was buried in Oxford if he was buried anywhere, and I don't know that he was. He might have been cremated, or minced up by high explosives so that they couldn't bury him."

"I thought I recognized her," said Thompson. "I went over to her table and had a good look to make sure."

"Don't pretend you know her," I said. "She certainly didn't know you."

"I looked at her photograph five times at least last night while you were asleep."

I thought this over for a minute. Then I said:

"You don't mean to tell me that she's the girl that boy is engaged to be married to——?"

"The exact same girl," said Thompson. "I couldn't be mistaken."

I meditated on the situation.

"I hope," I said, "that he won't have left the cathedral before she gets there."

"No fear," said Thompson, "he's a most conscientious boy. Having started out to do that cathedral he'll look at every stone of it before he leaves. He'll be there for hours yet. What I'm afraid of is that she won't go there."

"She started in the right direction," I said. "I saw her out of the window."

"I did my best anyhow," said Thompson. "I told her I wasn't going there. She didn't like me. I could see that. If I'd let her think I was going to the cathedral she'd have marched straight off to the station and sat in the Ladies' Waiting-room till her train started."

The girl, it appeared, did visit the cathedral and the boy was there. He was waiting for us on the platform at the railway station at half-past nine. He talked half the night to Thompson about his wonderful stroke of luck. Just as I dropped off to sleep I heard Thompson quoting Shakespeare. It was, to the best of my belief, the only time in his life that Thompson ever did quote Shakespeare.

> "Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
> Every wise man's son doth know,"

he said.

VII

HIS GIRL

THERE were thirty or forty officers in the lounge of the hotel, all condemned, as I was, to spend the greater part of the day there. Some men have better luck. It was the fourth time I had been held up in this wretched place on my way back to France after leave. Dragged out of our beds at an unreasonable hour, crammed into a train at Victoria, rushed down to an embarkation port as if the fate of the empire depended on our getting there without a minute's delay, we find, when we get out of the train, that the steamer will not start for three hours, four hours, on this occasion six hours. We are compelled to sit about in an hotel, desolate and disgusted, when we might have been comfortable in London.

I looked round to see if there were anyone I wanted to talk to. There were—I had seen them at Victoria—three or four men whom I knew slightly, but I had no particular wish to spend hours with any one of them. I had just decided to go out for a walk by myself when I felt a slap on my

shoulder. I turned and saw Daintree. I was uncommonly glad to see him. Daintree and I were friends before the war and I have always found him an amusing companion. He greeted me heartily.

"Great luck," he said, "running into you like this. I don't see a single other man I know in the whole crowd. And any way I particularly wanted to talk to you. I've got a story to tell you."

We secured a corner and two comfortable chairs. I lit a pipe and waited. Daintree is a wonderful man for picking up stories. The most unusual things happen to him and he gets mixed up in far more adventures than anyone else I know. And he likes telling stories. Usually, the men who have stories to tell will not talk, and the men who like talking have nothing interesting to tell. Daintree is exceptional.

"What is it this time?" I asked. "What journalists call a 'sob story,' or is it meant to be humorous?"

"I should call it a kind of joke," said Daintree; "but my wife says it's the most pathetic thing she's ever heard. It makes her cry even to think of it. You can take it either way. I'll be interested to see how you do take it. I was thinking of writing it to you, 'for your information and necessary action, please.' My wife wanted me to, but it's

too long for a letter. Besides, I don't see what you or anyone else could possibly do in the matter. You may give advice—that's what my wife expects of you—but there's really no advice to give. However, you can tell me how it strikes you. That's what I want to know, whether you agree with my wife or with me. You know Simcox, don't you, or do you? I forget."

"Simcox?" I said. "Is that a tall, cadaverous man in the Wessex? Rather mournful looking?"

"That's the man. Came home from a remote corner of the Argentine, or somewhere like that, early in the war, and got a commission. He's a captain now."

"I met him," I said, "down Albert way, shortly before the push last year. I can't say I knew him. He seemed to me rather a difficult kind of man to know."

"So my wife says," said Daintree. "He's older than most of us, for one thing, and has spent twenty years all by himself herding sheep or branding bullocks, or whatever it is they do out in those places. Naturally he'd rather lost touch with life at home and found it difficult to fit himself in; especially with a lot of boys straight from the 'Varsities or school. They were mostly boys in his battalion. Anyhow, he seems to have been a bit morose, but he did his job all right in the regiment

and was recommended for the M.C. He got knocked out in the Somme push and jolly nearly lost a leg. They saved it in the end and sent him down to my place to convalesce."

Daintree owns a very nice place in the Midlands. In the old days it was one of the pleasantest houses I know to stay in. Daintree himself was a capital host and his wife is a charming woman. The house is a convalescent home for officers now, and Mrs. Daintree, with the help of three nurses, runs it. Daintree pretends to regard this as a grievance, and says it was all his wife's doing, though he was just as keen on the place as she was.

"Damned nuisance," he said, "finding the place full of boys rioting when I get home on leave. And it's full up now—twelve of them, no less. There's hardly a spot in the house I can call my own, and they've spoiled the little lake I made at the bottom of the lawn. That young ass Pat Singleton started what he called boat-races on it——"

"Oh, Pat Singleton's there?" I said. "I knew he'd been wounded, but I didn't hear he'd been sent to your place."

"Pat Singleton's always everywhere," said Daintree. "I've never come across a place where he wasn't, and he's a devil for mischief. Remind me afterwards to tell you about the trick he played on the principal nurse, a Scotchwoman with a per-

fectly terrific sense of her own dignity." Daintree chuckled.

"If you'd rather tell me that story," I said, "instead of the one about Simcox, I'd just as soon have it. In fact, I'd prefer it. Sob stories are always trying."

"But I'm not sure that the Simcox one is a sob story, though there's a certain amount of slosh in it. Anyhow, I've got to tell it to you, for my wife says you're the only man she knows who can advise what ought to be done."

"All right," I said, "but Pat Singleton's escapades always amuse me. I'd like to hear about his making an apple-pie bed for that nurse."

Daintree chuckled again, and I gathered from the expression of his face that the nurse had endured something worse than an apple-pie bed.

"Or about the boat-races," I said. "I didn't know you had anything which floated on that lake of yours."

"I haven't," said Daintree, "except the kind of wooden box in which the gardener goes out to clear away the duck-weed. However, Pat Singleton comes into the Simcox story in the end. It's really about him that my wife wants your advice."

"No one," I said, "can give advice about Pat Singleton."

"Knowing the sort of man Simcox is," said

Daintree, "you'll understand that he was rather out of it at first in a house full of boys just out of hospital and jolly glad to have a chance of running about a bit. Pat Singleton wasn't there when Simcox arrived. But the others were nearly as bad; silly jokes from morning to night and an infernal row always going on. My wife likes that sort of thing, fortunately."

"Simcox, I suppose, just sat by himself in a corner of the veranda and glowered?"

"Exactly. And at first my wife could do nothing with him. In the end, of course——"

"In the end," I said, "she persuaded him to tell her his inmost secrets and to confide to her the tragedy of his soul. That's just what she would do."

Mrs. Daintree is a very kind and sympathetic lady. When she talks to me I feel ready to tell her anything. A man like Simcox, shy, reserved, and wholly unaccustomed to charming ladies, would succumb to her easily and pour out a love story or anything else he happened to have on his chest at the time.

"You see," said Daintree, "his leg was pretty stiff and he couldn't get about much, even if he'd wanted to. There was nothing for him to do except sit in a deck-chair. My wife felt it her duty to talk to him a good deal."

Daintree seemed to be making excuses for Mrs. Daintree and Simcox. They were unnecessary. Mrs. Daintree would have got his story out of him if she thought he was really in need of sympathy, whether he sat in a chair all day or was able to row races in the lake in the gardener's punt.

"Anyhow," said Daintree, "what he told her —he told it to me afterwards, so there's no secret about it—was this: He got hit in the leg during an advance through one of those woods north of the Somme, Mametz, I think. It was a beastly place. Our fellows had been in there two days before and had to clear out again. Then Simcox's lot went in —you know the sort of thing it was?"

I nodded.

"Shell holes, and splintered tree trunks," I said. "Machine-guns enfilading you, and H.E. bursting promiscuous. I know."

"Well, Simcox' fellows went in all right, and stayed there for a while. Simcox says he remembers noticing that the ground was strewed with débris left by the Germans when they cleared out, and by our fellows afterwards. Equipment, rifles and all the rest of it lying about, as well as other things—pretty ghastly things."

"You needn't go into details," I said. "I can guess."

"I'm only telling you this," said Daintree,

"because all the stuff lying about seems to have interested Simcox. It's odd the fellings men have at these times. Simcox says the thing he chiefly wanted to do was to tidy up. He had a kind of strong desire to pick things up and put them away somewhere. Of course he couldn't; but he did pick up one thing, a cigarette case. He showed it to me. It was one of those long-shaped, flat white metal cases which fellows carry because they hold about thirty cigarettes. Simcox says he doesn't know why he picked it up. He didn't want it in the least. He just saw it lying there on the ground and stuffed it into his pocket. Almost immediately after that he was hit. Bit of shrapnel under the knee."

"I remember hearing about that business," I said. "We were driven out again, weren't we?"

"Exactly. And Simcox was left behind. He couldn't walk, of course. But he crawled into a shell hole, and there he lay. Well, for the next two days that wood wasn't healthy for either side. The Germans couldn't get back, because we were sprinkling the whole place with shrapnel. We couldn't advance for similar reasons. Simcox just lay in his shell hole. He tied up his leg somehow. He had some brandy in a flask as well as his iron rations. But he hadn't much tobacco. There were only two cigarettes in his own case. However, he

had the other case, the one he picked up. There were nearly twenty in it. Also there was—I say, at this point the story gets sloppy."

"Never mind," I said. "Go on. What else was in the cigarette case? A farewell letter to a loving wife? Love to little Willie and a text of Scripture?"

"Not so bad as that. A photo of a girl. He showed it to me when he told me the story."

"Good looking girl?"

"Very. Large eyes—sort of tender, you know, and appealing; and a gentle, innocent face, and a mouth——"

"I suppose," I said, "that these raptures are necessary if I'm to understand the story. Otherwise, you may skip them."

"Can't possibly skip them," said Daintree. "The whole point of the story depends on your realizing the sort of girl she was. Pathetic—that's the word I want. Looked at you out of the photo as if she was a poor, lonely, but uncommonly fetching little thing, who wanted a strong, true man to shelter her from the evil world. She was got up in some sort of fancy dress which kind of heightened the effect. I don't altogether profess to understand what happened, though my wife says she does. But Simcox in a sort of way fell in love with her. That's not the way he put it. He didn't

feel that she was just an ordinary girl—the sort one falls in love with. She was—well, he didn't think of her as flesh and blood—more a kind of vision—spiritual, you know."

"Angel?" I said.

"That sort of thing. You know. That was the idea that gripped Simcox while he lay there in the shell hole. Stars came out at night and Simcox felt that she was looking down at him. In the day he used to lie and gaze at her. When he thought it was all up with him and that he couldn't live, he seemed to hear her voice—I say, you ought to hear my wife telling this part of the story. Simcox wouldn't tell it to me, naturally; but he seems to have enlarged on it a good deal to her. He says that only for that photo he'd have given in and just died. I daresay he wouldn't really, but he thinks he would. Anyhow, he didn't. He stuck it out and his leg didn't hurt nearly as much as he expected. He attributes that to the influence of this—this——"

"Angel visitant?" I said.

"You can call her an angel if you like," said Daintree.

"This," I said, "seems to me a pure sob story. If there's any other part less harrowing, I wish you'd hurry up and get to it."

"All right," said Daintree. "I'll cut out the

rest of his experiences in that shell hole, though, mind you, they're rather interesting and frightfully poetic the way my wife tells them. After two days our fellows got back into the wood and kept it. The stretcher-bearers found Simcox in his hole and they lugged him down to a Casualty Clearing Station. From that he went to a hospital—the usual round. He had a pretty bad time, first over there, and then, when they could move him, in London. By degrees he got more sane about the photo. He stopped thinking she was any kind of spirit and took to regarding her just as a girl, though a very exceptional kind of girl, of course. He was hopelessly in love with her. Do you think a man really could fall in love with a photo?"

"Simcox did," I said, "so we needn't discuss that point."

"The chances were, of course," said Daintree, "that she was some other fellow's girl, possibly some other fellow's wife. But Simcox didn't care. He was too far gone to care for anything except to get that girl. Those morose, shy men are frightfully hard hit in that sort of way, I'm told. That's what my wife says, anyhow. They get it much worse than we do when they do get it. Simcox would have dragged that girl out of the arms of an archbishop if that was where he found her. Of course he couldn't go hunting her over England

while he was in hospital with a bad leg; but he made up his mind to find out who she was and where she lived as soon as he was well enough to go about. He'd very little to go on—practically nothing. The photo had been cut down so as to fit into the cigarette case, so that there wasn't even a photographer's name on it."

"He might have advertised," I said. "There are papers which go in for that sort of thing, publish rows of reproductions of photographs 'Found on the battle-field,' with requests for identification."

"My wife thought of that," said Daintree, "but Simcox didn't seem to take to the idea. He said the photo was too sacred a thing to be reproduced in a paper. My own idea is that he was afraid of any kind of publicity. You see, the other fellow might turn up—the fellow who really had a right to the girl."

"How the deuce did he propose to find her?"

"I don't know. He told my wife some rotten yarn about instinct guiding him to her; said he felt sure that the strength of his great love would somehow lead him to her side. He didn't say that to me, couldn't, you know. But it's wonderful what a fellow will say to a woman, if she's sympathetic, and my wife is. Still, even so, he must be more or less mad to think a thing like that. Mad about the girl. He's sane enough in every other way."

"He can't be so mad as that," I said. "Just fancy going out into a field—I suppose that's the way you'd do it—and hanging about until your great love set you strolling off either to the right or to the left. No man, however mad, could expect to come on a girl that way—no one particular girl, I mean. Of course you'd meet several girls whichever way you went. Couldn't help it. The world's full of girls."

"I don't know what he meant," said Daintree, "but my wife sympathized with him and seemed to think he'd pull it off in the end. At first he was a bit shy of letting her see the photo; but when he saw she was as sympathetic as all that he showed it to her. Well, the moment she saw it, she felt that she knew the face."

"That was a stroke of luck for Simcox."

"No it wasn't," said Daintree, "for my wife couldn't put a name to the girl. She was sure she had seen her somewhere, knew her quite well, in fact, but simply couldn't fix her. Funny thing, but it was exactly the same when they showed me the photo. At the first glance I said right away that I knew her. Then I found I couldn't say exactly who she was. The more I looked the more certain I was that I'd seen her somewhere, her or someone very like her. And it wasn't a commonplace face by any means. Poor Simcox kept beg-

ging us to think. My wife went over our visitors' book—we've kept one of those silly things for years —but there wasn't a name in it which we couldn't account for. I got out all the old albums of snapshots and amateur photos in the house. You know the way those things accumulate; groups of all sorts. But we couldn't find the girl. And yet both my wife and I were sure we'd met her. Then one morning Simcox burst into my wife's little sitting-room—a place none of the convalescents have any right to go. He was in a fierce state of excitement. Said that an officer who'd arrived the night before was exactly like the photo and that the girl must be his sister or cousin, or something. The only officer who came that night was—you'd never guess!—Pat Singleton."

"Pat," I said, "though a young devil, is cheerful, and I never saw him anything but self-confident. I can't imagine a girl such as you described bearing the faintest resemblance to that boy. You said that she was a kind of die-away, pathetic, appealing angel. Now Pat——"

"I know," said Daintree. "All the same, the likeness was there. The moment I looked at the photo with Pat in my mind I knew why I thought I recognized it. My wife said the same thing."

"But Pat Singleton hasn't any sisters," I said.

"No, he hasn't. He hasn't even a first cousin

anything like the age of the girl in the photo. I knew all the Singletons well, have for years. But Simcox insisted his girl must be some relation of Pat's, and in the end I promised to ask the boy. In the first place, if she was a relation, it seemed an impudent sort of thing to do, and if she wasn't, Pat would be sure to make up some infernal story about me and a girl and tell it all over the place. However, my wife egged me on and poor Simcox was so frightfully keen that I promised.

"Well, I sent for Pat Singleton next morning. He was a little subdued at first, as much subdued as I've ever seen him. He thought I was going to rag him about the spoof he'd played off on the nurse. He did that before he was twelve hours in the house. Remind me to tell you about it afterwards. I don't wonder he looked piano. She'd been going for him herself and that woman is a real terror. However, he cheered up the moment I showed him the photo of the girl. He asked me first of all where the devil I'd got it. Said he'd lost it somewhere before he was wounded."

"Oh, it was his, then?" I said.

"Yes," said Daintree, grinning, "it was his. He was particularly anxious to know how I came by it. I didn't tell him, of course. Couldn't give Simcox away, you know. Then Pat began to cheek me. Asked if I'd fallen in love with the girl and

what my wife would say when he told her. Said he carried the photo about with him and showed it to fellows just to watch them falling in love with her. It seems that nine men out of ten admired her greatly. He asked me if I didn't think she was the prettiest girl I'd ever seen, and that I wasn't the first man by any means who wanted her name and address. He grinned in a most offensive way and said that he never gave away that girl's name to anyone; that I ought to know better than to go running after a nice, innocent little thing like that who wouldn't know how to take care of herself. I wasn't going to stand much of that sort of talk from Pat Singleton. I told him straight that if he didn't tell me that girl's name and where she lived I'd make things hot for him. I threatened to report the little game he'd had with the nurse and that if I did he'd be court-martialled. I don't know whether a man could be court-martialled for cheeking a nurse, but the threat had a good effect on Pat. He really was a bit afraid of that woman. I don't wonder, though it's the first time I've ever known him afraid of anyone."

Daintree paused and chuckled horribly.

"Well," I said, "who was the girl?"

"Haven't you tumbled to it yet?" said Daintree.

"No. Do I know her?"

"I can't say you exactly know her," said Dain-

tree. "You know *him*. It was a photo of Pat himself dressed up as the Sleeping Beauty, or Fatima, or some such person in a pantomime they did down at the base last Christmas when he was there. The young devil carried the thing about with him so as to play off his silly spoof on every fellow he met. I must say he made a damned pretty girl."

"Good Lord!" I said. "And how did Simcox take it?"

"Simcox hasn't been told—yet," said Daintree. "That's just what my wife wants your advice about. You see it's an awkward situation."

"Very," I said.

"If we tell him," said Daintree, "he'll probably try to kill Pat Singleton, and that would lead to a lot of trouble. On the other hand, if we don't tell him he'll spend the rest of his life roaming about the world looking for a girl who doesn't exist, and never did. It seems a pity to let that happen."

"My idea," I said, "would be to get another girl, not necessarily like the photo, but the same type, appealing and pathetic and all that. He'd probably take to her after a time."

"I suggested that," said Daintree, "but my wife simply won't hear of it. She says the story as it stands is a great romance and that it would be

utterly spoiled if Simcox switched off after another girl. I can't see that, can you?"

"In a case like this," I said, "when the orignial girl wasn't a girl at all——"

"Exactly," said Daintree, "but when I say that my wife brings up the Angel in the Shell Hole part of the story and says that a great romance is its own reward."

"I don't know what to advise," I said.

"I didn't think you would," said Daintree, "though my wife insisted that you'd be able to suggest something. But you can tell me what you think of the story. That's what I really want to get out of you. Is it a Sob Story or just a rather unusual spoof?"

"That," I said, "depends entirely whether you look at it from Simcox' point of view or Pat Singleton's."

VIII

SIR GALAHAD

THE order, long expected and eagerly desired, came at last. The battalion moved out from dusty and crowded barracks to a camp in the wilderness. Lieutenant Dalton, a cheerful boy who had been taught Holy Scripture in his childhood, wrote to his mother that the new camp was "Somewhere in the wilderness beyond Jordan between the river of Egypt and the great sea." This description of the situation was so entirely inaccurate that the Censor allowed it to pass without complaint. Old Mrs. Dalton told her friends that her son was living under the shadow of Mount Sinai. He was, in fact, nowhere near either Jordan or Sinai. He was some miles east of the Suez Canal.

For a week or so officers and men rejoiced in their new quarters. There was plenty of elbow room; no more of the overcrowding they had suffered since they landed. They had, indeed, miles of totally unoccupied desert at their disposal. Each

tent might have stood in its own private grounds, three acres or so in extent, if that had not been felt by the colonel to be an inconvenient arrangement. There was also—and this particularly pleased the battalion—the prospect of a fight with the Turks. Everyone believed when the move was made that a battle was imminent, and the battalion, which had no experience of fighting, was most anxious to show what it could do.

After awhile the enthusiasm for the new camp began to fade. The Turks did not put in an appearance, and life was as peaceful as it had been in the English camp where the battalion was trained. The situation of the camp, though roomy, was not exciting. Both officers and men began to find existence exceedingly dull. Lieutenant Dalton, who at this time wrote long letters to his mother, told her that he understood at last why the Children of Israel were so desperately anxious to get back to Egypt and were inclined to rag Moses about the want of melons and cucumbers. At the end of the month the whole battalion was bored to exasperation.

The desert which stretched in front of the camp was intolerably flat. The sun rose with pitiless regularity, shone with a steady glare for a great many hours, and then set. That was all that ever happened. The coming of a cloud into the sky

would have been greeted with cheers. No cloud appeared. A sandstorm, however disagreeable, would have been welcomed as a change. The sand stayed quietly where it was. The men tried football, and gave it up because of the blistering heat. They played "House" until even the excitement of that mild gamble exhausted itself. No other form of amusement suggested itself. There was not even any work to do. Had the battalion belonged to the Brigade of Guards it would no doubt have gone on doing barrack-square drill every day and all day long until the men learned to move like parts of a machine. But this was a Territorial battalion, and the colonel held reasonable views about modern warfare. The value of drill, a mechanical business, was in his opinion easily exaggerated. Had the battalion belonged to an Irish regiment there would probably have been several interesting fights and some means of obtaining whisky would have been devised. In such ways the men would have escaped the curse of monotony, and the officers would have been kept busy in the orderly room. But this battalion came from the English Midlands. The men did not want to fight each other, and had no overpowering desire to get drunk. When the morning parades were over they lay in their tents and grumbled peacefully.

Under such circumstances tempers often wear

thin, and a habit of bickering takes possession of a mess. It is greatly to the credit of everyone concerned that there was no sign of bad temper among the officers of the battalion. The colonel lived a good deal by himself in his tent, but was always quietly good-humoured. Lieutenant Dalton, an incurably merry boy, kept the other subalterns cheerful. Only Captain Maitland was inclined to complain a little, and he had a special grievance, an excuse which justified a certain amount of grumbling. He slept badly at night, and liked to read a book of some sort after he went to bed. The mess had originally possessed an excellent supply of books, some hundred volumes of the most varied kind supplied by the Camps Libraries' Association at home. Unfortunately, almost all the books were left behind when the move was made. Only three volumes were to be found in the new camp—one novel, a treatise on the culture of apple trees, and Mallory's "Morte D'Arthur."

Captain Maitland blamed the chaplain for the loss.

"You ought to have looked after those books, padre," he said. "It's a padre's business to look after books.

The Rev. John Haddingly, C.F., was a gentle little man, liked by the officers because he was entirely unassuming, and popular with the men

because he was always ready to help them. He accepted the whole blame for the loss of the books without an attempt to defend himself.

"I'm awfully sorry, Maitland," he said. "I ought to have seen to those books. I did look after the Prayer Books. They're here all right; at least most of them are."

"Prayer Books!" said Maitland. "If they were even whole Prayer Books! But those little yellow tracts of yours! They haven't even got the Thirty-Nine Articles in them. If they were pukka Prayer Books I'd borrow one and try to read it. I expect there are lots of interesting things in the small print parts of the Prayer Book, the parts you padres never read out. But what's the good of the books you have? Nothing in them but what we all know off by heart."

Haddingly sighed. He was painfully conscious of the shortcomings of the Field Service Books supplied for the use of the troops. Dalton came to his defence.

"Don't strafe the padre," he said. "He brought along a church, an entire church. Is there another padre in the whole Army who could have got a church to a place like this?"

Dalton's almost incredible statement was literally true. Haddingly had succeeded, contrary to all regulations, in bringing with him from England a

corrugated iron church. It was quite a small one, it folded up and could be packed flat. When unpacked and erected it was undeniably a church. It had a large cross at one end of it outside. Inside it was furnished with an altar, complete with cross and candlesticks, a collapsible harmonium and a number of benches. Chaplains have certainly no right to load up troopships with churches, but Haddingly had somehow got his to Egypt. By what blandishments the transport officer had been induced to drag the thing out into the desert beyond the canal no one knew. Haddingly was one of those uncomplainingly meek men who never stand up for themselves. It is a curious fact, but it is a fact, that a really helpless person gets things done for him which the most aggressive and masterful men cannot accomplish. The success in life of women of the "clinging" kind is an illustration of this law.

Haddingly smiled with joy at the mention of his church. It stood, securely bolted together, a little outside the camp. No one, the cross being disproportionately large, could possibly mistake it for anything but a church. In front of it was a notice board, a nice black notice board with a suggestion of Gothic architecture about it. On the board, in bright white letters, was a list of services and the name of the church—St. John in the Wilderness.

Originally, before the move into the desert, it had been simply St. John the Evangelist, but Haddingly felt that the new circumstances demanded a change of dedication. Everyone, from the colonel down to the humblest private, was secretly proud of the church. The possession of such a thing gave a certain distinction to the battalion. Haddingly was a good deal chaffed about it; but the building was in a fair way to become a regimental mascot.

"I'm not strafing the padre," said Captain Maitland, "but I wish we had a few of the books we left behind."

"To listen to you talking," said Dalton, "anyone would think you were some kind of literary swell—Hall Caine and Wordsworth rolled into one, whereas we all know that the only thing you take an interest in is horses."

Captain Maitland was very far from being a literary swell or claiming any such title. The books he really liked, the only books he read when he had a free choice, were sporting stories with a strong racing and betting interest. But in camp in the wilderness no sporting stories were obtainable. The one novel which remained to the mess dealt with the sex problem, a subject originally profoundly uninteresting to Maitland, who had a healthy mind. He read it, however, as a remedy for insomnia. It proved effective. A couple of

chapters sent him to sleep every night, so the book lasted a good while.

Every morning at breakfast Maitland used to propound the problems raised by the chapters which he had read the night before. The mess got into the way of holding informal debates on the divorce laws. When he finished the book, Maitland declared that he intended to devote himself to Eugenics and the more enlightened kind of social reform as soon as the war was over.

"I never thought of it before," he said, "but I can see now that the future of the Empire really depends on the proper legislation for child welfare, on ante-natal clinic, and the abolition of the old empiric methods of marriage."

"Wait till after I'm married before you begin," said Dalton.

Haddingly was a little pained. He said things about the sanctity of marriage and the family as a divine institution. No one else took Maitland seriously. It was felt that when the war came to an end—if it ever did—he would go back to horse-racing and leave the scientific aspects of marriage in decent obscurity.

When he had finished the novel he took the book on apple trees to bed with him. He became, after a short time, interested in that subject. He announced that when the war was over he intended

to buy a small place in Devonshire and go in for orchards.

"Apple growing," he said, "is just exactly the peaceable, shady kind of life a man wants after being stuck down in a desert like this."

"With your taste for the turf," said Dalton, "you'll get into a shady kind of life all right, whether you plant apple trees or not."

Dalton was an irreverent boy. Haddingly was greatly pleased at the thought of Maitland sitting innocently under an apple tree.

The turn of Mallory came next. Maitland left it for the last because the print was very small and the only light in his tent was a feeble candle. When he got fairly started in the book he became profoundly interested, and the other members of the mess were treated at breakfast time to a good deal of information about medieval warfare.

"As far as I can make out," Maitland said, "every officer in those days was knighted as soon as he got his commission."

"Jolly good idea," said Dalton. "I should buck about like anything if they made me a K.C.B."

"You wouldn't have been an officer or a knight," said Maitland. "You'd have been the court fool. You've no idea whatever of chivalry."

Like most simple men who read very little, Maitland took the books he did read seriously and was

greatly influenced by them. The apple tree treatise made him want to be a gardener. A slow and careful study of Mallory filled him with a profound admiration for medieval romance.

"The reason modern war is such a sordid business," he said, "is that we've lost the idea of chivalry."

"Chivalry is all very well," said Dalton, "if there's anyone to chival about. I haven't read much about those old knights of yours, Maitland; but so far as I can make out from what you tell us they were always coming across damsels, fair, distressed, and otherwise fetching. Now, I haven't seen a damsel since I left England. How the deuce can I be chivalrous? I defy anyone, even that Lancelot blighter of yours, to go into raptures about the old hag you turned out of the camp yesterday for selling rotten dates to the men."

Dalton was not the only member of the mess who made jokes about the knights of King Arthur's fellowship. But Maitland went on reading out selected passages from Mallory, and there is no doubt that everyone, even Dalton, became interested. Haddingly, the padre, made no attempt to conceal the fact that he was profoundly influenced.

He had always been proud of his church, but had hitherto been content to use it in the normal way for parade services on Sunday morning. The

services were undeniably popular. The men enjoyed singing hymns, and they listened patiently to the sermons because they liked Haddingly. The officers, who also liked Haddingly, attended the Sunday morning services with great regularity. Dalton, though he preferred playing rag-time on the piano, accompanied the hymns on the harmonium.

Haddingly was greatly moved by Maitland's account of the medieval spirit. He took to spending half an hour in the church every morning before breakfast. Nobody knew what he did there. The officers, through feelings of delicacy, never asked him questions about these new devotions. The men, who were getting to know and like Haddingly better and better as time went on, regarded his daily visits to the church as proof that their padre was one who knew his job and did it thoroughly.

One morning—the mess had then been discussing medieval chivalry for about a fortnight—Maitland read out a passage from Mallory about a visit paid by Sir Galahad to a lonely chapel among the mountains, "where he found nobody at all for all was desolate." Haddingly had just spent his lonely half hour in the church of St. John in the Wilderness. He sighed. He found nobody there in the mornings, and could not help wishing that the battalion

contained a Galahad. Dalton felt that something must be done to preserve the credit of the mess and the dignity of English manhood. He felt sure that sentiment about desolate chapels was an unwholesome thing. He scoffed:

"All very well for Gallipot," he said, "but——"

"Galahad," said Maitland.

"Galahad, or Gallipot, or Golly-wog," said Dalton. "If a man has a silly name like that, it doesn't matter how you spell it. The point is that it would be simply ridiculous to attempt that sort of thing now. Suppose, for instance—— I put it to you, padre. Suppose you saw Maitland mounted on one of the transport gee-gees trotting up to that tin cathedral of yours—on a week-day, mind! I'm not talking about Sundays. Suppose he got down and went inside all by himself, what would you think, padre? There's only one thing you could think, that Maitland had been drinking."

"Sir Galahad," said Maitland, "went in to say his prayers. He was on his way to a battle. They didn't have to wait months and months for a battle in those days. They had a scrap of some sort about once a week."

He sighed. The Turks had failed to do what was expected of them, and life in the camp was intolerably dull.

He looked at Haddingly. It was plainly a

padre's duty to support a spiritual and romantic view of life against the profane jibes of Dalton. Haddingly spoke judicially.

"The general tone of society in those days," he said, "seems to have been very different from what it is now. Men had much less difficulty in giving expression to their emotions. No doubt we still feel much as they did, but——"

Haddingly became aware that no one was listening to him. The attention of everyone at the table was attracted by something else. The men sat stiffly, listening intently. Haddingly heard a faint, distant humming sound. It grew louder.

"Jiminy!" said Dalton, "an aeroplane!"

The breakfast table was laid in the open air outside the mess tent. The men rose from their seats and stared in the direction of the coming sound. It was the first time that an aeroplane had approached the camp in the desert. Its coming was an intensely exciting event, an unmistakable evidence of activity somewhere; surely a sign that activity everywhere might be expected.

The sound increased in volume. The machine appeared, a distant speck in the clear sky. It grew rapidly larger, flying fast. It was seen to be a biplane. It passed directly over the camp, flying so low that the head of the pilot was plainly visible. In a few minutes it passed from sight. The hum

of its engines grew fainter. But till the sound became inaudible no one spoke.

Then a babble of inquiry and speculation broke out. Where was the thing going? What was it doing? What did its sudden swift voyage mean? For the rest of the day the camp was less sleepy than usual. Men everywhere discussed the aeroplane. Dalton was not the only one who envied the members of the Flying Corps. It seemed a very desirable thing to be able to rush through the air over unknown deserts; to have the chance of seeing strange and thrilling things, Arab encampments, green oases, mirages, caravans and camels; to drop bombs perhaps on Syrian fortresses; to estimate the numbers of Turkish columns on the march, to reckon their strength in artillery; to take desperate risks; to swerve and dart amid clouds of bursting shrapnel. How much more gloriously exciting such a life than that of men baking slowly in the montony of a desert camp.

Maitland, stimulated by his reading to an unnatural effort of imagination, recognized in the men of the Flying Corps the true successors of Mallory's adventurous knight-errants. For them war still contained romance. Chivalry was still possible. Haddingly caught the thought and expanded it. Knights of old had this wonderful

spirit, because to them the forests through which they roamed were unknown wastes, where all strange things might be expected. Then when all the land became familiar, mapped, intersected with roads, covered thick with towns, sailors inherited the spirit of romance. Afterwards all the seas were charted, policed, and ships went to and fro on ocean highways. The romance of adventure was lost to seamen, lost to the world, until the airmen came and found it again by venturing on new ways.

In the evening the aeroplane returned. Once more its engines were heard. Once more it appeared, a speck, a shape, a recognizable thing. But this time it did not pass away. On reaching camp it circled twice, and then, with a long swift glide, took the ground outside the camp a few yards beyond Haddingly's church of St. John in the Wilderness. The pilot stepped out of the machine.

"Good man," said Dalton. "Friendly of him dropping in on us like this. Must want a drink after that fly. Eight hours at least. I'll go and bring him along to the mess. Hope he'll tell us what he's been doing. Wonder if the Turks potted at him."

The pilot left his machine. He walked stiffly, like a man with cramped limbs, towards the camp.

"Something wrong with the engine, perhaps,"

said Dalton. "Or he's short of petrol. I'll fetch him along. A whisky and soda in a big tumbler is the thing for him. I dare say he'll stay for dinner."

He started and walked quickly towards the machine. The airman, approaching the camp, reached the church. Instead of passing it he stopped, opened the door, and went in. Dalton paused and looked back.

"Must have mistaken your tin cathedral for the mess, padre," he said. "I'll run on and fetch him out."

"If he's made a mistake," said Haddingly, "he'll find it out for himself and come out without your fetching him."

Dalton stood still. His eyes were on the door of the church. Maitland and Haddingly were gazing at it too. The other officers, gathered in a group outside the mess tent, stood in silence, staring at the church. It seemed as if hours passed. In fact, nearly half an hour went by before the door of the church opened and the airman came out. He turned his back on the camp and went towards his machine. Neither Dalton nor anyone else made an attempt to overtake him. The noise of the engine was heard again. The machine raced a few yards along the ground and then rose in steep flight. It passed across the camp and sped westwards, its

shape sharply outlined for a minute against the light of the setting sun. Then it disappeared.

Maitland took Haddingly by the arm and led him to his tent. The two men sat down together on the camp bedstead. Maitland opened Mallory's "Morte d'Arthur," and read aloud:

> "'Then Sir Galahad came unto a mountain, where he found an old chapel, and found there nobody, for all was desolate, and there he kneeled before the altar and besought of God wholesome counsel."

"I suppose it was just that," said Haddingly.

Dalton put his head into the tent.

"I thought I'd find you here," he said. "I just wanted to ask the padre something. Was that Sir Golliwog come to life again or just some ordinary blighter like me suffering from nerve strain?"

Haddingly had no answer to give for a moment.

"He can't have really wanted to sit in that church for half an hour," said Dalton. "What the dickens would he do it *for?*"

"He might have wanted to pray," said Haddingly.

Not even his profession justified the saying of such a thing as that outside church. But every excuse must be made for him. He had been soaked

in Mallory for a fortnight. Deserts, even when there are camps in them, are queer places, liable to upset men's minds, and the conduct of the airman was certainly peculiar.

"Of course, if you put it that way," said Dalton, "I've nothing more to say. All the same, he might have come into the mess for a drink. I'm not complaining of his doing anything he liked in the way of going to church; but I don't see that a whisky and soda would have hurt him afterwards. He must have wanted it."

IX

A GUN-RUNNING EPISODE

SAM McALISTER walked into my office yesterday and laid down a handful of silver on my desk.

"There you are," he said, "and I am very much obliged to you for the loan."

For the moment I could not recollect having lent Sam any money; though I should be glad to do so at any time if I thought he wanted it. Sam is a boy I like. He is an undergraduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and has the makings of a man in him, though he is not good at passing examinations and has never figured in an honours list. Some day, when he takes his degree, he is to come into my office and be made into a lawyer. His father, the Dean, is an old friend of mine.

I looked at the money lying before me, and then doubtfully at Sam.

"If you've forgotten all about it," he said, "it's rather a pity I paid. But I always was honest. That's one of my misfortunes. If I wasn't——. That's the fine you paid for me."

Then I remembered. Sam got into trouble with the police a few weeks ago. He and a dozen or so of his fellow-students broke loose and ran riot through the streets of Dublin. All high-spirited boys do this sort of thing occasionally, whether they are junior army officers, lawyers' clerks, or university undergraduates. Trinity College boys, being Irish and having a large city at their gates, riot more picturesquely than anyone else. Sam had captured the flag which the Lord Mayor flies outside his house, had pushed a horse upstairs into the office of a respectable stockbroker, and had driven a motor-car, borrowed from an unwilling owner, down a narrow and congested street at twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. He was captured in the end by eight policemen, and was very nearly sent to gaol with hard labour. I got him off by paying a fine of one pound, together with £2 4s. 6d. for the damage done by the horse to the stockbroker's staircase and office furniture. The motor-car, fortunately, had neither injured itself nor anyone else.

"I hope," I said, pocketing the money, "that this will be a lesson to you, Sam."

"It won't," he said. "At least, not in the way you mean. It'll encourage me to go into another rag the very first time I get the chance. As a matter of fact, being arrested was the luckiest thing

ever happened to me, though I didn't think so at the time."

"Well," I said, "if you like paying up these large sums it's your own affair. I should have thought you could have got better value for your money by spending it on something you wanted."

"Money isn't everything in the world," said Sam. "There is such a thing as having a good time, a rattling good time, even if you don't make money out of it and run a chance of being arrested. I daresay you'd like to hear what I've been at."

"If you've committed any kind of crime," I said, "I'd rather you didn't tell me. It might be awkward for me afterwards when you are tried."

"I don't think it's exactly a crime," said Sam, "anyhow, it isn't anything wrong, though, of course, it may be slightly illegal. I'd rather like to have your opinion about that."

"Is it a long story? I'm rather busy to-day."

"Not very long," said Sam, "but I daresay it would sound better after dinner. What would you say now to asking me to dine to-night at your club? We could go up to that library place afterwards. There's never anybody there, and I could tell you the whole thing."

Sam knows the ways of my club nearly as well as I do myself. There is never anyone in the library in the evening. I gave the required invitation.

We dined comfortably, and I got a good cigar for Sam afterwards. When the waiter had left the room he plunged into his story.

"You remember the day I was hauled up before that old ass of a magistrate. He jawed a lot and then fined me £3 4s. 6d., which you paid. Jolly decent of you. I hadn't a shilling in the world, being absolutely stony broke at the time; so if you hadn't paid—and lots of fellows wouldn't—I should have had to go to gaol."

"Never mind about that," I said. "You've paid me back."

"Still, I'm grateful, especially as I should have missed the spree of my life if I'd been locked up. As it was, thanks to you, I walked out of the court without a stain on my character."

"Well, hardly that. You were found guilty of riotous behaviour, you know."

"Anyhow, I walked out," said Sam, "and that's the main point."

It was, of course, the point which mattered most; and, after all, the stain on Sam's character was not indelible. Lots of young fellows behave riotously and turn out excellent men afterwards. I was an undergraduate myself once, and there is a story about Sam's father, now a dean, which is still told occasionally. When he was an undergraduate a cow was found tied up in the big examination hall.

Sam's father, who was very far from being a dean then, had borrowed the cow from a milkman.

"There were a lot of men waiting outside," said Sam. "They wanted to stand me a lunch in honour of my escape."

"Your fellow-rioters, I suppose?"

"Well, most of them had been in the rag, and, of course, they were sorry for me, being the only one actually caught. However, the lunch never came off. There was a queer old fellow standing on the steps of the court who got me by the arm as I came out. Said he wanted to speak to me on important business, and would I lunch with him. I didn't know what he could possibly have to say to me, for I had never seen him before; but he looked—it's rather hard to describe how he looked. He wasn't exactly what you'd call a gentleman, in the way of clothes, I mean; but he struck me as being a sportsman."

"Horsey?"

"Not the least. More like one's idea of some kind of modern pirate, though not exactly. He talked like an American. I went with him, of course."

"Of course," I said, "anyone with an adventurous spirit would prefer lunching with an unknown American buccaneer to sharing a commonplace feast

with a mob of boys. Did you happen to hear his name?"

"He said it was Hazlewood, but——"

"But it may not have been?"

"One of the other fellows called him Cassidy later on."

"Oh," I said, "there were other fellows?"

"There were afterwards," said Sam, "not at first. He and I lunched alone. He did me well. A bottle of champagne for the two of us and offered me a second bottle. I refused that."

"He came to business after the champagne, I suppose?"

"He more or less talked business the whole time, though at first I didn't know quite what he was at. He gassed a lot about my having knocked down those two policemen. You remember that I knocked down two, don't you? I would have got a third only that they collared me from behind. Well, Hazlewood, or Cassidy, or whatever his name was, had seen the scrap, and seemed to think no end of a lot of me for the fight I put up."

"The magistrate took a serious view of it, too," I said.

"There wasn't much in it," said Sam modestly. "As I told Hazlewood, any fool can knock down a policeman. They're so darned fat. He asked me if I liked fighting policemen. I said I did."

"Of course."

Sam caught some note of sarcasm in my voice. He felt it necessary to modify his statement.

"Well, not policemen in particular. I haven't a special down on policemen. I like a scrap with anyone. Then he said—Hazlewood, that is—that he admired the way I drove that car down Grafton Street. He said he liked a man who wasn't afraid to take risks; which was rot. There wasn't any real risk."

"The police swore that you went at thirty miles an hour," I said. "And that street is simply crowded in the middle of the day."

"I don't believe I was doing anything like thirty miles an hour," said Sam. "I should say twenty-seven at the outside. And there was no risk because everybody cleared out of my way. I had the street practically to myself. It was rather fun seeing all the other cars and carts and things piled up upon the footpaths at either side and the people bolting into the shops like rabbits. But there wasn't any risk. However, old Hazlewood evidently thought there was, and seemed frightfully pleased about it. He said he had a car of his own, a sixty h.p. Daimler, and that he'd like to see me drive it. I said I'd take him for a spin any time he liked. I gave him a hint that we might start immediately after lunch and run up to Belfast in time for dinner. With a

car like that I could have done it easy. However, he wasn't on."

"Do you think he really had the car?"

"Oh, he had her all right. I drove her afterwards. Great Scott, such a drive! The next thing he said was that he believed I was a pretty good man in a boat. I said I knew something about boats, though not much."

Modesty is one of Sam's virtues. He is, I believe, an excellent hand in a small yacht, and does a good deal of racing.

"I asked him what put it into his head that I could sail a boat, and he said O'Meara told him. O'Meara is a man I sail with occasionally, and I thought it nice of him to mention my name to this old boy. I can hoist a spinnaker all right and shift a jib, but I'm no good at navigation. Always did hate sums and always will. I told him that, and he said he could do the navigation himself. All he wanted was a good amateur crew for a thirty-ton yawl with a motor auxiliary. He had four men, and he asked me to make a fifth. I said I'd go like a shot. Strictly speaking, I ought to have been attending lectures; but what good are lectures?"

"Very little," I said. "In fact, hardly any."

"I wasn't going to lose a cruise for the sake of any amount of lectures," said Sam, "particularly

with the chance of a tour on that sixty h.p. car thrown in."

Sam paused at this point. It seemed to me that he wanted encouragement.

"You'd have been a fool if you had," I said.

"Up to that time," said Sam thoughtfully, "I hadn't tumbled to what he was at. I give you my word of honour I hadn't the dimmest idea that he was after anything in particular. I thought he was simply a good old sport with lots of money, which he knew how to spend in sensible ways."

"The criminal part of the business was mentioned later on, I suppose?"

"I don't know that there's anything criminal about it," said Sam. "I'm jolly well sure it wasn't wrong, under the circumstances. But it may have been criminal. That's just what I want you to tell me."

"I'll give you my opinion," I said, "when I hear what it was."

"Gun-running," said Sam.

Gun-running has for some time been a popular sport in Ireland, and I find it very difficult to say whether it is against the law or not. The Government goes in for trying to stop it, which looks as if a gun-runner might be prosecuted when caught. On the other hand, the Government never prosecutes gun-runners, even those who openly boast of

their exploits, and that looks as if it were quite a legal amusement. I promised Sam that I would consider the point, and I asked him to tell me exactly what he did.

"Well," he said, "when I heard it was gun-running I simply jumped at the chance. Any fellow would. I said I'd start right away, if he liked. As a matter of fact, we didn't start for nearly a fortnight. The boat turned out to be the *Pegeen.* You know the *Pegeen,* don't you?"

I did not. I am not a sailor, and except that I cannot help seeing paragraphs about *Shamrock IV.* in the daily papers I do not think I know the name of a single yacht.

"Well," said Sam, "she's O'Meara's boat. I've sailed in her sometimes in cruiser races. She's slow and never does any good, but she's a fine sea boat. My idea was that Hazlewood had hired her, and I didn't find out till after we had started that O'Meara was on board. That surprised me a bit, for O'Meara goes in for being rather an extreme kind of Nationalist—not the sort of fellow you'd expect to be running guns for Carson and the Ulster Volunteers. However, I was jolly glad to see him. He crawled out of the cabin when we were a couple of miles out of the harbour, and by that time I'd have been glad to see anyone who knew one end of the boat from the other. Old Hazlewood was all right; but

the other three men were simply rotters, the sort of fellows who'd be just as likely as not to take a pull on a topsail halyard when told to slack away the lee runner. I was just making up my mind to work the boat single-handed when O'Meara turned up. There was a middling fresh breeze from the west, and we were going south on a reach. I didn't get much chance of a talk with O'Meara because he was in one watch and I in the other—had to be, of course, on account of being the only two who knew anything about working the boat. I did notice, though, that when he spoke to Hazlewood he called him Cassidy. However, that was no business of mine. We sailed pretty nearly due south that day and the next, and the next after that. Then we hove to."

"Where?" I asked.

"Ask me another," said Sam. "I told you I couldn't navigate. I hadn't an idea within a hundred miles where we were. What's more, I didn't care. I was having a splendid time, and had succeeded in knocking some sort of sense into the other fellow in my watch. Hazlewood steered, and barring that he was sea-sick for eight hours, my man turned out to be a decent sort, and fairly intelligent. He said his name was Temple, but Hazlewood called him O'Reilly as often as not."

"You seem to have gone in for a nice variety of names," I said. "What did you call yourself?"

"I stuck to my own name, of course. I wasn't doing anything to be ashamed of. If we'd been caught and the thing had turned out to be a crime—I don't know whether it was or not, but if it was, I suppose——"

"I suppose I should have paid your fine," I said.

"Thanks," said Sam. "Thanks, awfully. I rather expected you would whenever I thought about that part of it, but I very seldom did."

"What happened when you lay to?"

"Nothing at first. We bumped about a bit for five or six hours, and Temple got frightfully sick again. I never saw a man sicker. Hazlewood kept on muddling about with charts, and doing sums on sheets of paper, and consulting with O'Meara. I suppose they wanted to make sure that they'd got to the right place. At last, just about sunset, a small steamer turned up. She hung about all night, and next day we started early, about four o'clock, and got the guns out of her, or some of them. We couldn't take the whole cargo, of course, in a 30-ton yacht. I don't know how many more guns she had. Perhaps she hadn't any more. Only our little lot. Anyhow, I was jolly glad when the job was over. There was a bit of a roll—nothing much, you know, but quite enough to make

it pretty awkward. Temple got over his sea-sickness, which was a comfort. I suppose the excitement cured him. The way we worked was this—but I daresay you wouldn't understand, even if I told you."

"Is it very technical? I mean, must you use many sea words?"

"Must," said Sam. "We were at sea, you know."

"Well," I said, "perhaps you'd better leave that part out. Tell me what you did with the guns when you'd got them."

"Right. It was there the fun really came in. Not that I'm complaining about the other part. It was sport all right, but the funny part, the part you'll like, came later. What about another cigar?"

I rang the bell, and got two more cigars for Sam.

"We had rather a tiresome passage home," he said. "It kept on falling calm, and O'Meara's motor isn't very powerful. It took us a clear week to work our way up to the County Down coast. It was there we landed, in a poky little harbour. We went in at night, and had to wait for a full tide to get in at all. We got the sails of the boat outside, and just strolled in, so to speak, with the wretched little engine doing about half it could. Hazlewood told me that he expected four motor-

cars to meet us, and that I was to take one of them, and drive like hell into County Armagh. There I was to call at a house belonging to O'Meara, and hand over my share of the guns. He said he hoped I knew my way about those parts, because it would be awkward for me trying to work with road maps when I ought to drive fast. I said I knew that country like the palm of my hand. The governor's parish is up there, you know."

Sam certainly ought to know County Down. He was brought up there, and must have walked, cycled, and driven over most of the roads.

"The only thing I didn't know," said Sam, "was O'Meara's house. I'd never heard of his having a house in that part of the country. However, he said he'd only taken it lately, and that when I got over the border into Armagh there'd be a man waiting to show me where to go. He told me the road I was to take and I knew every turn of the way, so I felt pretty sure of getting there. It was about two in the morning when we got alongside the pier. The four motors were there all right, but there wasn't a soul about except the men in charge of them. We got out the guns. They were done up in small bundles and the cartridges in handy little cases; but it took us till half-past four o'clock to get them ashore. By that time there were a few people knocking about; but they didn't seem to

want to interfere with us. In fact, some of them came and helped us to pack the stuff into the cars. They were perfectly friendly."

"That doesn't surprise me in the least," I said. "The people up there are nearly all Protestants. Most of them were probably Volunteers themselves. I daresay it wasn't the first cargo they'd helped to land."

"It was the first cargo they ever helped to land for the National Volunteers," said Sam with a grin.

"The National Volunteers!"

I admit that Sam startled me. I do not suppose that he has any political convictions. At the age of twenty a man has a few prejudices but no convictions. If he is a young fellow who goes in for being intellectual they are prejudices against the party his father belonged to. If—and this is Sam's case—he is a healthy-minded young man, who enjoys sport, he takes over his father's opinions as they stand, and regards everybody who does not accept them as an irredeemable blackguard. The Dean is a very strong loyalist. He is the chaplain of an Orange Lodge, and has told me more than once that he hopes to march to battle at the head of his regiment of Volunteers.

"Smuggling arms for the Nationalists!" I said.

"That's what I did," said Sam, grinning broadly. "But I thought all the time that I was working for

the other side. I didn't know the Nationalists went in for guns; thought they only talked. In fact, to tell you the truth, I forgot all about them. Otherwise I wouldn't have done it. At least I mightn't. But I had a great time."

"Of course," I said, "I don't mind. So far as I am concerned personally I'd rather neither side had any guns. But if your faher finds out, Sam, there'll be a frightful row. He'll disown you."

"The governor knows all about it," said Sam, "and he doesn't mind one bit. Just wait till you hear the end of the story. You'll be as surprised as I was."

"I certainly shall," I said, "if the story ends in your father's approving of your smuggling guns for rebels. He'd call them rebels, you know."

"Oh," said Sam, "as far as rebellion goes I don't see that there's much to choose between them. However, that doesn't matter. What happened was this. I got off with my load about five o'clock, and I had a gorgeous spin. There wasn't a cart or a thing on the roads, and I just let the car rip. I touched sixty miles an hour, and hardly ever dropped below forty. Best run I ever had. Almost the only thing I passed was a motor lorry, going the same way I was. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but it turned out to be important after-

wards. It was about seven o'clock when I got out of County Down into Armagh. I began looking out for the fellow who was to meet me. It wasn't long before I spotted him, standing at a corner, trying to look as if he were a military sentry. You know the sort of thing I mean. Bandolier, belt, and frightfully stiff about the back. He held up his hand and I stopped. 'A loyal man,' he said. Well, I was, so far as I knew at that time, so I said 'You bet.' 'That's not right,' said he. 'Give the countersign.' I hadn't heard anything about a countersign, so I told him not to be a damned fool, and that I'd break his head if he said I wasn't a loyal man. That seemed to puzzle him a bit. He got out a notebook and read a page or two, looking at me and the car every now and then as if he wasn't quite satisfied. I felt pretty sure, of course, that he was the man I wanted. He couldn't very well be anyone else. So by way of cutting the business short I told him I was loaded up with guns and cartridges, and that I wished he'd hop in and show me where to go. 'That's all very fine,' he said, 'but you oughtn't to be in a car like that.' I told him there was no use arguing about the car. I wasn't going back to change it to please him. He asked me who I was, and I told him, mentioning that I was the governor's son. I thought that might help him to make up his mind, and it did. The governor

is middling well known up in those parts, and the mention of his name was enough. The fellow climbed in beside me. We hadn't very far to go, as it turned out, and in the inside of twenty minutes I was driving up the avenue of a big house. The size of it rather surprised me, for I didn't think O'Meara was well enough off to keep up a place of the kind. However, I was evidently expected, for I was shown into the dining-room by a footman. There were three men at breakfast, my old dad, Dopping—you know Dopping, don't you?"

Dopping is a retired cavalry colonel. I do business for him and know him pretty well. He is just the sort of man who would be in the thick of any gun-running that was going on.

"There was another man," said Sam, "whom I didn't know and wasn't introduced to. The fact is there wasn't much time for politeness. My dad looked as if he'd been shot when he saw me, and old Dopping bristled all over like an Irish terrier at the beginning of a fight, and asked me who the devil I was and what I was doing there. Of course, he jolly well knew who I was, and I thought he must know what brought me there, so I just winked by way of letting him understand that I was in the game. He got so red in the face that I thought he'd burst. Then the other man chipped in and asked me what I'd got in the car. The three of them

whispered together for a bit, and I suggested that if they didn't believe me they'd better go and see. The car was outside the door, and their own man was sitting on the guns. Dopping went, and I suppose he told the other two that the guns were there all right. Dad asked me where I got them, and I told them, mentioning Hazlewood's name and the name of the yacht. I was a bit puzzled, but I still thought everything was all right, and that there'd be no harm in mentioning names. I very soon saw that there was some sort of mistake somewhere. The governor and old Dopping and the other man, who seemed to be the coolest of the three, went over to the window and looked at the car. Then they started whispering again, and I couldn't hear a word they said. Didn't want to. I was as hungry as a wolf, and there was a jolly good breakfast on the table. I sat down and gorged. I had just started my third egg when the door opened, and a rather nice-looking young fellow walked in. The footman came behind him, looking as white as a sheet, and began some sort of apology for letting the stranger in. Old Dopping, who was still in a pretty bad temper, told the footman to go and be damned. Then the new man introduced himself. He said he was Colonel O'Connell, of the first Armagh Regiment of National Volunteers. I expected to see old Dopping kill him at sight. Dopping is a

tremendous loyalist, and the other fellow—well—phew!"

Sam whistled. Words failed him, I suppose, when it came to expressing the disloyalty of a colonel of National Volunteers.

"Instead of that," said Sam, "Dopping stood up straight, and saluted O'Connell. O'Connell stiffened his back, and saluted Dopping. The third man, the one I didn't know, stood up, too, and saluted. O'Connell saluted him. Then the governor bowed quite civilly, and O'Connell saluted him. I can tell you it was a pretty scene. 'I beg to inform you, gentlemen,' said O'Connell, 'that a consignment of rifles and ammunition, apparently intended for your force, has arrived at our headquarters in a motor lorry.' Nothing could have been civiller than the way he spoke. But Dopping was not to be beat. He's a bristly old bear at times, but he always was a gentleman. 'Owing to a mistake,' he said, 'some arms, evidently belonging to you, are now in a car at our door.' The governor and the other man sat down and laughed till they were purple, but neither O'Connell nor old Dopping so much as smiled. It was then—and I give you my word not till then—that I tumbled to the idea that I'd been running guns for the other side. I expected that there'd be a furious row the minute the governor stopped laughing. But there wasn't. In fact, no

one took any notice of me. There was a long consultation, and in the end they settled that it might be risky to start moving the guns about again, and that each party had better stick to what it had got. Our fellows—I call them our fellows, though, of course, I was really acting for the others—our fellows got rather the better of the exchange in the way of ammunition. But O'Connell scooped in a lot of extra rifles. When they had that settled they all saluted again, and the governor said something about hoping to meet O'Connell at Philippi. I don't know what he meant by that, but O'Connell seemed tremendously pleased. Where do you suppose Philippi is?"

"Philippi," I said, "is where somebody—Julius Cæsar, I think, but it doesn't matter—— What your father meant was that he hoped to have a chance of fighting it out with O'Connell some day. Not a duel, you know, but a proper battle. The Ulster Volunteers against the other lot."

"We shall have to wipe out the police first," said Sam, "to prevent their interfering. I hope I shall be there then. I want to get my own back out of those fellows who collared me from behind the day of the last rag. But, I say, what about the soldiers—the regular soldiers, I mean? Which side will they be on?"

"That," I said, "is the one uncertain factor in the problem. Nobody knows."

"The best plan," said Sam, "would be to take them away altogether, and leave us to settle the matter ourselves. We'd do it all right, judging by the way old Dopping and O'Connell behaved to each other."

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. I should never have suspected Sam of profound political wisdom. Bt it is quite possible that his suggestion would meet the case better than any other.

X

IRELAND FOR EVER

LORD DUNSEVERICK picked his way delicately among the pools and rough cobble stones. He was a very well-dressed young man, and he seemed out of place amid the miry traffic of the Belfast quays. A casual observer would have put him down as a fashionable nincompoop, one of those young men whose very appearance is supposed to move the British worker to outbursts of socialistic fury. The casual observer would, in this case, have been mistaken. Lord Dunseverick, in spite of his well-fitting clothes, his delicately coloured tie, and his general air of sleek well-being, was at that moment—it was the month of May, 1914—something of a hero with the Belfast working man. And the Belfast working man, as everybody knows, is more bitterly contemptuous of the idle rich, especially of the idle rich with titles, than any other working man.

The Belfast working man had just then worked himself up to a degree of martial ardour, unprecedented even in Ulster, in his opposition to Home

Rule. Lord Dunseverick was one of the generals of the Ulster Volunteer Force. He had made several speeches which moved Belfast to wild delight and sober-minded men elsewhere to dubious shaking of the head. Enthusiasm in a cause is a fine thing, especially in the young, but when Lord Dunseverick's enthusiasm led him to say that he would welcome the German Emperor at the head of his legions as the deliverer of Ulster from the tyranny of a Parliament in Dublin, why then—then the rank and file of the volunteer army cheered, and other people wondered whether it were quite wise to say such things. Yet Lord Dunseverick, when not actually engaged in making a speech, was a pleasant and agreeable young man with a keen sense of humour. He even—and this is a rare quality in men—saw the humorous side of his own speeches. The trouble was that he never saw it till after he had made them.

A heavy motor-lorry came thundering along the quay. Lord Dunseverick dodged it, and escaped with his life. He was splashed from head to foot with mud. He looked at his neat boots and well-fashioned grey trousers. The black slime lay thick on them. He wiped a spot of mud off his cheek and rubbed some wet coal dust into his collar. Then he lit a cigarette, and smiled.

He stepped into the porch of a reeking public-

house and found himself beside a grizzled man, who looked like a sailor. Lord Dunseverick turned to him.

"Can you tell me," he said, "where Mr. McMunn's office is?"

"Is it coal you're wanting?" asked the sailor.

It is thus that questions are often met in Belfast with counter-questions. Belfast is a city of business men, and it is not the habit of business men to give away anything, even information, without getting something in return. The counter-question may draw some valuable matter by way of answer from the original questioner. In this case the counter-question was a reasonable one. McMunn, of McMunn Brothers, Limited, was a coal merchant. Lord Dunseverick, though a peer, belonged to the north of Ireland. He understood Belfast.

"What I want," he said, "is to see Mr. Andrew McMunn."

"I've business with Andrew McMunn myself," said the sailor, "and I'm going that way."

"Good. Then we'll go together."

"My name," said the sailor, "is Ginty. If you're intimate with Andrew McMunn you'll likely have heard of me."

"I haven't. But that's no reason why you shouldn't show me the way."

"It's no that far," said Ginty.

They walked together, sometimes side by side, sometimes driven apart by a string of carts.

"If it had been Jimmy McMunn you wanted to see," said Ginty, "you might have had further to go. Some says Jimmy's in the one place, and more is of opinion that he's in the other. But I've no doubt in my own mind about where Andrew will go when his time comes."

"You know him pretty well, then?"

"Ay, I do. It would be queer if I didn't, seeing that I've sailed his ships this ten year. Andrew McMunn will go to heaven."

"Ah," said Lord Dunseverick, "he's a good man, then?"

"I'll no go so far as to say precisely that," said Ginty, "but he's a man who never touches a drop of whisky nor smokes a pipe of tobacco. It'll be very hard on him if he doesna go to heaven after all he's missed in this world. But you'll find out what kind of man he is if you go in through the door forninst you. It's his office, thon one with the brass plate on the door. My business will keep till you're done with him."

Lord Dunseverick pushed open one of a pair of swinging doors, and found himself in a narrow passage. On his right was a ground glass window bearing the word "Inquiries." He tapped at it.

For a minute or two there was no response. Lord Dunseverick brushed some of the mud, now partially dry, off his trousers, and lit a fresh cigarette. The ground glass window was opened, and a red-haired clerk looked out.

"I want to see Mr. McMunn," said Lord Dunseverick, "Mr. Andrew McMunn."

The clerk put his head and shoulders out through the window, and surveyed Lord Dunseverick suspiciously. Very well dressed young men, with pale lavender ties and pearl tie-pins—Lord Dunseverick had both—are not often seen in Belfast quay-side offices.

"If you want to see Mr. McMunn," said the clerk—"and I'm no saying you will, mind that—you'd better take yon cigarette out of your mouth. There's no smoking allowed here."

Lord Dunseverick took his cigarette out of his mouth, but he did not throw it away. He held it between his fingers.

"Just tell Mr. McMunn," he said, "that Lord Dunseverick is here."

The clerk's manner altered suddenly. He drew himself up, squared his shoulders, and saluted.

The discovery that a stranger is a man of high rank often produces this kind of effect on men of strong democratic principles, principles of the kind held by clerks in all business communities,

quite as firmly in Belfast as elsewhere. But it would have been a mistake to suppose that Mr. McMunn's junior clerk was a mere worshipper of title. His salute was not the tribute of a snob to the representative of an aristocratic class. It was the respect due by a soldier, drilled and disciplined, to his superior officer. It was also the expression of a young man's sincere hero-worship. The red-haired clerk was a Volunteer, duly enrolled, one of the signatories of the famous Ulster Covenant. Lord Dunseverick had made speeches which moved his soul to actual rapture.

"Come inside, my lord," he said. "I'll inform Mr. McMunn at once."

Lord Dunseverick passed through a door which was held open for him. He entered a large office, very grimy, which is the proper condition of a place where documents concerning coal are dealt with. Six other clerks were at work there. When Lord Dunseverick entered, all six of them stood up and saluted. They, too, so it appeared, were members of the Volunteer Force. The red-haired junior clerk crossed the room towards a door marked "Private." Then he paused, and turned to Lord Dunseverick.

"Might I be so bold as to ask a question?" he said.

"A dozen if you like," said Lord Dunseverick.

"What about the rifles? It's only them we're wanting now.. We're drilled and we're ready, but where's the rifles?"

"You shall have them," said Lord Dunseverick.

The clerks in Mr. McMunn's office were accustomed to behave with decorum. No more than a low murmur of approval greeted Lord Dunseverick's words; but the men looked as if they wished to cheer vehemently. The red-haired boy tapped at the door which was marked "Private." A minute later he invited Lord Dunseverick to pass through it.

Andrew McMunn is a hard-faced, grizzled little man, with keen blue eyes. He can, when he chooses, talk excellent English. He prefers, when dealing with strangers, to speak with a strong Belfast accent, and to use, if possible, north of Ireland words and phrases. This is his way of asserting independence of character. He admires independence.

His office is a singularly unattractive room. He writes at a large table, and has a fireproof safe at his elbow. There are three wooden chairs ranged against the wall opposite the writing-table. Four photographs of steamers, cheaply framed, hang above the chairs. They are *The Andrew McMunn*, *The Eliza McMunn*, and, a tribute to the deceased Jimmy, *The McMunn Brothers*. These form the

fleet owned by the firm, and carry coal from one port to another, chiefly to Belfast. On the chimney-piece, under a glass shade, is a model of *The McMunn Brothers,* the latest built and largest of the ships.

"Good-morning to you, my lord!" said McMunn, without rising from his seat.

He nodded towards one of the chairs which stood against the wall. This was his way of inviting his visitor to sit down. His eyes were fixed, with strong disapproval, on the cigarette, which still smoked feebly in Lord Dunseverick's hand.

"Your clerk gave me a hint," said Dunseverick, "that you object to tobacco."

"It's my opinion," said McMunn, "that the man who pays taxes that he needn't pay—I'm alluding to the duty on tobacco, you'll understand—for the sake of poisoning himself with a nasty stink, is little better than a fool. That's my opinion, and I'm of the same way of thinking about alcoholic drink."

Lord Dunseverick deposited the offending cigarette on the hearth and crushed it with his foot.

"Teetotaller?" he said. "I dare say you're right, though I take a whisky-and-soda myself when I get the chance."

"You'll no get it here," said McMunn; "and what's more, you'll no get it on any ship owned by me."

"Thank you. It's as well to understand beforehand."

"I'm a believer in speaking plain," said McMunn. "There's ay less chance of trouble afterwards if a man speaks plain at the start. But I'm thinking that it wasn't to hear my opinion on the Christian religion that your lordship came here the day."

McMunn, besides being a teetotaller, and opposed to the smoking of tobacco, was the president of a Young Men's Anti-Gambling League. He was, therefore, in a position to throw valuable light on the Christian religion.

"I came to settle the details about this expedition to Hamburg," said Lord Dunseverick.

"Well," said McMunn, "there's no that much left to settle. *The Brothers* is ready."

"*The Brothers?*"

"*The McMunn Brothers.* Thon's the model of her on the chimneypiece."

Lord Dunseverick looked at the model attentively. It represented a very unattractive ship. Her bow was absurdly high, cocked up like the snout of a Yorkshire pig. Her long waist lay low, promising little freeboard in a sea. Her engines and single funnel were aft. On a short, high quarterdeck was her bridge and a squat deck-house. She was designed, like her owner, for purely business purposes.

"You'll have the captain's cabin," said McMunn. "Him and me will sleep in the saloon."

"Oh, you're coming too?"

"I am. Have you any objection?"

"None whatever. I'm delighted. We'll have a jolly time."

"I'll have you remember," said McMunn, "that it's not pleasuring we're out for."

"It's serious business. Smuggling rifles in the teeth of a Royal Proclamation is——"

"When I understand," said McMunn, "and you understand, where's the use of saying what we're going for? I'm taking risks enough anyway, without unnecessary talking. You never know who's listening to you."

"About paying for the—er—the—er—our cargo? Is that all arranged?"

"They'll be paid in bills on a Hamburg bank," said McMunn.

"Won't they expect cash? I should have thought that in transactions of this kind——"

"You're not a business man, my lord; but I'd have you know that a bill with the name of McMunn to it is the same as cash in any port in Europe."

"Well, that's your part of the affair. I am leaving that to you."

"You may leave it. What I say I'll do. But

there's one thing that I'm no quite easy in my mind about."

"If you're thinking about the landing of the guns——"

"I'm no asking what arrangements you've made about that. The fewer there is that knows what's being done in a business of this kind, the better for all concerned. What's bothering me is this. There's a man called Edelstein."

"Who's he? I never heard of him before."

"He's the Baron von Edelstein, if that's any help to you."

"It isn't. He's not the man we're buying the stuff from."

"He is not. Nor he wasn't mentioned from first to last till the letter I got the day."

He turned to the safe beside him and drew out a bundle of papers held together by an elastic band.

"That's the whole of the correspondence," he said, "and there's the last of it."

He handed a letter to Lord Dunseverick, who read it through carefully.

"This baron," he said, "whoever he is, intends to pay his respects to us before we leave Hamburg. Very civil of him."

"It's a civility we could do without. When I'm doing business I'd rather do it with business men, and a baron, you'll understand, is no just——"

"I'm a baron myself," said Lord Dunseverick.

"Ay, you are."

McMunn said no more. He left it to be understood that his opinion of barons in general was not improved by his acquaintance with Lord Dunseverick.

"I don't think we need bother about Von Edelstein, anyway," said Lord Dunseverick. "What harm can he do us?"

"I'm no precisely bothering about him," said McMunn; "but I'd be easier in my mind if I knew what he wanted with us."

"We sail to-night, anyway," said Lord Dunseverick.

"Ay, we do. I tell't Ginty. He's the captain of *The McMunn Brothers*, and a good man."

"I've met him. In fact——"

"If you've met Ginty you've met a man who knows his business, though I wish he'd give over drinking whisky. However, he's a strong Protestant and a sound man, and you can't expect perfection."

"Capital!" said Lord Dunseverick. "It's a great comfort to be sure of one's men."

"I wish I was as sure of every one as I am of Ginty," said McMunn. "I'm no saying that your lordship's not sound. The speech you made last

night at Ballymena was good enough, and I'm with you in every word of it; but——"

"Oh, speeches!" said Lord Dunseverick.

He was uneasily conscious that he had allowed himself to be carried away by the excitement of the occasion when speaking at Ballymena. It was right and proper to threaten armed resistance to Home Rule. It was another thing to offer a warm welcome to the German Emperor if he chose to land in Ulster. Tht cold emphasis with which McMunn expressed agreement with every word of the speech made Lord Dunseverick vaguely uneasy.

"Ay," said McMunn; "your speeches are well enough, and I don't say, mind you, that you're not a sound man; but I'd be better pleased if you were more serious. You're too fond of joking, in my opinion."

"Good heavens!" said Lord Dunseverick. "I haven't ventured on the ghost of a joke since I came into your office!" He looked round him as he spoke, and fixed his eyes at last on the fireproof safe. "Nobody could."

"It's no what you've said, it's your lordship's appearance. But it's too late to alter that, I'm thinking."

"Not at all," said Lord Dunseverick. "I'll join you this evening in a suit of yellow oilskins, the

stickiest kind, and a blue fisherman's jersey, and a pair of sea-boots. I'll have——"

"You will," said McMunn, "and you'll look like a play actor. It's just what I'm complaining of."

II

The McMunn Brothers lay, with steam up, at a single anchor a mile below the Hamburg quays. The yellow, turbid waters of the Elbe swept past her sides. Below her stretched the long waterway which leads to the North Sea. The lights of the buoys which marked the channel twinkled dimly in the gloom of the summer evening. Shafts of brighter light swept across and across the water from occulting beacons set at long intervals among buoys. Above the steamer lay a large Norwegian barque waiting for her pilot to take her down on the ebb tide. Below *The McMunn Brothers* was an ocean-going tramp steamer. One of her crew sat on the forecastle playing the "Swanee River" on a melodeon.

McMunn, Ginty, and Lord Dunseverick were together in the cabin of *The McMunn Brothers*. McMunn, dressed precisely as he always dressed in his office, sat bolt upright on the cabin sofa. In front of him on the table were some papers, which he turned over and looked at from time to time.

Beside him was Ginty, in his shirt sleeves, with his peaked cap pushed far back on his head. He sat with his elbows on the table. His chin, thrust forward, rested on his knuckles. He stared fixedly at the panelling on the opposite wall of the cabin. Lord Dunseverick, who had a side of the table to himself, leaned far back. His legs were stretched out straight in front of him. His hands were in his pockets. He gazed wearily at the small lamp which swung from the cabin roof.

For a long time no one spoke. It was Lord Dunseverick who broke the silence in the end. He took his cigarette-case from his pocket.

"You may say what you like about tobacco, McMunn," he said, "but it's a comfort to a man when he has no company but a bear with a sore head."

"Ay," said McMunn, "you'll smoke and you'll smoke, but you'll no make me any easier in my mind by smoking."

Ginty drew a plug of black tobacco from his pocket, and began cutting shreds from it with a clasp knife. He was apparently of opinion that smoking would relieve the strain on *his* mind.

"I'm no satisfied," said McMunn.

"I don't see what you have to grumble about," said Lord Dunseverick. "We've got what we came for, and we've got our clearance papers. What more do you want? You expected trouble about

those papers, and there wasn't any. You ought to be pleased."

"There you have it," said McMunn. "According to all the laws of nature there ought to have been trouble. With a cargo like ours there ought to have been a lot of trouble. Instead of that the papers are handed over to us without a question."

"It's peculiar," said Ginty. "It's very peculiar, and that's a fact."

"Then there's the matter of those extra cases," said McMunn. "How many cases is there in the hold, Ginty?"

"A hundred, seventy-two."

"And the contract was for one-fifty. What's in the odd twenty-two? Tell me that."

"Pianos," said Lord Dunseverick. "Look at your clearance papers. 'Nature of Cargo—Pianos.'"

"You'd have your joke," said McMunn, "if the flames of hell were scorching the soles of your boots."

"It's peculiar," said Ginty.

"It's more than peculiar," said McMunn. "I've been in business for thirty years, and it's the first time I ever had goods given me that I didn't ask for."

"Well," said Lord Dunseverick, "if we've got

an extra five hundred rifles we can't complain. There's plenty of men in Ulster ready to use them."

"Maybe you'll tell me," said McMunn, "why they wouldn't let me pay for the goods in the office this afternoon. Did anyone ever hear the like of that—a man refusing money that was due to him, and it offered?"

"It's out of the course of nature," said Ginty.

"They told you," said Lord Dunseverick, "that you could pay Von Edelstein, and he'd give you a receipt."

"Ay, Von Edelstein. And where's Von Edelstein?"

"He's coming on board this evening," said Lord Dunseverick. "But you needn't wait for him unless you like. We've got steam up. Why not slip away?"

"Because it's no my way of doing business," said McMunn, "to slip away, as you call it, without paying for what I've got. I'm a man of principle."

"Talking of your principles," said Lord Dunseverick, "what did you bring on board in that basket this afternoon? It looked to me like beer."

"It was beer."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Lord Dunseverick. "Let's have a couple of bottles."

Ginty took his pipe from his mouth and grinned pleasantly. He wanted beer.

"You'll be thinking maybe," said McMunn, "that I'm going back on my temperance principles?"

"We don't think anything of the sort," said Lord Dunseverick. "We think that foreign travel has widened your principles out a bit. That's what we think, isn't it, Ginty?"

"My principles are what they always were," said McMunn, "but I've some small share of commonsense. I know there's a foreigner coming on board the night, a baron and a dissipated man——"

"Come, now,'" said Lord Dunseverick, "you can't be sure that Von Edelstein is dissipated. You've never met him."

"He's a foreigner and a baron," said McMunn, "and that's enough for me, forbye that he's coming here under very suspicious circumstances. If I can get the better of him by means of strong drink and the snare of alcoholic liquors——"

"Good Lord!" said Lord Dunseverick. "You don't expect to make a German drunk with half a dozen bottles of lager beer, particularly as Ginty and I mean to drink two each."

"There's a dozen in the basket. And, under the circumstances, I consider myself justified. I'm no man for tricks, but if there's any tricks to be played, I'd rather play them myself than have them played

on me. Mind that now. It's the way I've always acted, and it's no a bad way."

"Gosh," said Ginty, "there's somebody coming aboard of us now. The look-out man's hailing him."

He left the cabin as he spoke.

A few minutes later Ginty entered the cabin again. He was followed by a tall man, so tall that he could not stand quite upright in the little cabin.

"It's the baron," said Ginty.

"*Guten Abend,*" said McMunn.

He possessed some twenty more German words, and knew that "beer" was represented by the same sound as in English. The equipment seemed to him sufficient for the interview.

"I have the good fortune to speak English easily," said Von Edelstein. "Am I addressing myself to Mr. McMunn?"

"Ay," said McMunn, "you are. And this is Lord Dunseverick, a baron like yourself."

Von Edelstein bowed, and held out his hand.

"I prefer," he said, "my military title, Captain von Edelstein. I believe that Lord Dunseverick also has a military title. Should I say colonel?"

"As a matter of fact," said Lord Dunseverick, "I'm not in the Army."

"I understand," said Von Edelstein. "You are

in the Volunteers, the Ulster Volunteers. But, perhaps I should say general?"

"I don't call myself that," said Lord Dunseverick. "As a matter of fact, my rank is not officially recognized, in England, I mean."

"Ah, but here—we recognize it. I assure you, general, we regard the Ulster Volunteers as a properly constituted military force."

McMunn had been groping in a locker behind him. He interrupted Von Edelstein by setting a basket on the table.

"Beer," he said.

Von Edelstein bowed, and sat down.

"Ginty," said McMunn, "get some tumblers. And now Baron——"

"Captain," said Von Edelstein.

"We'll get to business. What's in them twenty-two cases that was dumped into our hold today?"

"Ah," said Von Edelstein, smiling. "A little surprise. I hope, I feel confident, a pleasant surprise, for my comrades of the Ulster Volunteer Force."

Ginty entered the cabin carrying three tumblers and a corkscrew. The beer was opened and poured out. Von Edelstein raised his glass.

"To the Ulster Volunteer Force," he said, "and to the day when the pleasant little surprise we have

prepared for you may prove a very unpleasant surprise for—the enemy."

He bowed and drank.

"What's in them cases?" said McMunn.

"Gentlemen," said Von Edelstein, "something that will be of great value to you—machine guns."

"We didn't order them," said McMunn, "and I'm not going to pay for them."

"I am not authorized," said Von Edelstein, "to reveal secrets of State; but I think I may trust your discretion so far as to say that one very highly placed desires that the Ulster Volunteer Force should be thoroughly equipped for war. It is his wish——"

"Baron," said McMunn, "here's a bill drawn on my firm for the price of the rifles. I'll trouble you for a receipt, and in the matter of the contents of them cases—I don't say they're not machine guns, but I've no way of knowing at present. If it turns out that they're any use to us we may strike a bargain, but I'll no pay for a pig in a poke."

He laid his bill and a form of receipt on the table. Von Edelstein pushed them aside.

"Gentlemen," he said, "between comrades in arms there is no question of payment. It is the wish of one who is very highly placed that your army——"

"But look here," said Lord Dunseverick, "we are not comrades in arms, as you call it."

"Ah," said Von Edelstein. "Not to-day, not to-morrow perhaps. But who knows how soon? When the word is given, and some batteries of our artillery land in Belfast to support your excellent infantry——"

"What's that?" said Ginty.

"And a regiment of Prussian Guards——"

"There'll be no Prussians in Belfast," said Ginty, "for we'll not have it."

"I am afraid," said Lord Dunseverick, "that you've got some wrong idea into your head."

"But," said Von Edelstein, "you cannot fight alone. You would be—what do you call it?—you would be wiped out. Even the English Army could do that. You have no artillery. You have no cavalry. What are you but——"

"Who said we were going to fight the English Army?" said Lord Dunseverick.

"If you think we're a pack of dirty rebels," said Ginty, "you're making a big mistake. We're loyal men."

"But if you are not going to fight the English," said Von Edelstein, "God in heaven, who are you going to fight?"

"Young man," said McMunn, "you're drinking

beer in my ship, a thing which is clean contrary to my principles, though I'm putting up with it; but you're going beyond the beyonds when you sit here and take the name of the Almighty in vain. I'll trouble you not to swear."

Von Edelstein stared at him in blank amazement. Then very slowly a look of intelligence came over his face. He turned to Lord Dunseverick.

"I think I understand," he said. "You do not quite trust me. You fear that I may be a spy in the pay of infamous Englishmen. But you are mistaken—entirely mistaken. I offer you proof of my good faith. General, be so kind as to read my commission."

He drew a folded document from his pocket, and spread it out before Lord Dunseverick.

"It is signed," he said, "as you see, by the Emperor himself. It places my services, the services of Captain von Edelstein, of the Prussian Guard, at the disposal of the Ulster Volunteer Force, as military organiser."

Lord Dunseverick glanced at the document before him. He read parts of it with close attention. He laid his finger on the signature as if to convince himself by actual touch that it really was what it seemed to be.

"You see," said Von Edelstein, "I am to be trusted. When you and I are fighting side by side

against the cursed English, your enemies and ours——"

Von Edelstein was still smiling. What happened then happened in an instant. Lord Dunseverick struck the German full on the mouth with his fist. Von Edelstein's head went back. His hands clutched convulsively at the tablecloth. Before he had recovered, Lord Dunseverick hit him again, beat him down on the cabin sofa, and struck blow after blow at his face.

"You infernal scoundrel," he said, "do you take me for a traitor?"

"Quit it," said McMunn. "Quit it when I tell you. You cannot kill the man with your naked fists, and you'll break the furniture."

Ginty drew a long coil of rope from a locker. He tied up Von Edelstein and laid him, a helpless figure, on the table.

"It's my opinion," said McMunn, "that we'd better be getting out to sea."

"I'm thinking the same," said Ginty.

He went on deck. Soon *The McMunn Brothers* was under way.

Lord Dunseverick looked at the prostrate Von Edelstein.

"What are we going to do with him?" he asked.

"Drown him," said McMunn.

A trickle of blood was running down Von Edel-

stein's chin. He spat out some fragments of broken teeth.

"It appears," he said, "that I have made a mistake about your intentions."

"You've offered an outrageous insult to loyal men," said McMunn.

"A mistake," said Von Edelstein, "but surely excusable. I have in my pocket at the present moment—would you be so kind as to feel in my breast pocket? You'll find some papers there, and a newspaper cutting among them."

Lord Dunseverick slipped his hand into the prisoner's pocket. He drew out a number of letters and a newspaper cutting. It was a report, taken from the *Belfast News Letter*, of the speech which he had made at Ballymena a fortnight before. He had proclaimed the Kaiser the deliverer of Ulster. His own words stared him in the face. McMunn took the cutting and glanced at it. He thumped his fist on the table.

"I stand by every word of it," he said. "We will not have Home Rule."

"You are a curious people," said Von Edelstein. "I thought—and even now you say——"

"That speech," said McMunn, "was made for an entirely different purpose. If you thought that we wanted a German Army in Ulster, or that we meant to fire on the British flag——"

"It is exactly what I did think," said Von Edelstein.

"You're a born fool, then," said McMunn.

"Perhaps," said Lord Dunseverick, "we ought not to drown him. Suppose we take him home, and hand him over to the Ulster Provisional Government?"

"I wish you would," said Von Edelstein. "I am a student of human nature. I should greatly like to meet your Ulster Government."

"You'll maybe not like it so much when they hang you," said McMunn, "and it's what they'll do."

XI

SIR TIMOTHY'S DINNER-PARTY

MR. COURTNEY, the R.M., was a man of ideas, and prided himself on his sympathy with progress, the advance of thought, and similar delights. If he had been thirty years younger, and had lived in Dublin, he would have been classed among the "Intellectuals." He would then have written a gloomy play or two, several poems and an essay, published at a shilling, in a green paper cover, on the "Civilization of the Future." Being, unfortunately, fifty-five years of age, he could not write poetry or gloomy plays. Nobody can after the age of forty. Being a Resident Magistrate, he was debarred from discussing the Civilization of the Future in print. No Government allows its paid servant to write books on controversial subjects. But Mr. Courtney remained intellectually alert, and was a determined champion of the cause of progress, even amid the uncongenial society of a West of Ireland town.

The introduction of Summer Time gave Mr. Courtney a great opportunity. Almost everyone

else in the neighbourhood objected to the change of the clock. Cows, it was said, disliked being milked before their accustomed hour. Dew collects in deep pools, and renders farm work impossible in the early morning. It is unreasonable to expect labourers, who have to rise early in any case, to get out of their beds before the day is properly warm. Mr. Courtney combated all these objections with arguments which struck him as sound, but irritated everybody else. When it appeared that Ireland, worse treated as usual than England, was to be fined an additional twenty-five minutes, and was to lose the proud privilege of Irish time, Mr. Courtney was more pleased than ever. He made merry over what he called the arguments of reactionary patriotism.

Sir Timothy was the principal landlord, and, socially, the most important person in the neighbourhood. Sir Timothy did not like Mr. Courtney. He was of opinion that the R.M. was inclined to take a high hand at Petty Sessions and to bully the other magistrates—Sir Timothy was himself a magistrate—who sat with him on the Bench. He also thought that Mr. Courtney was "too d——d superior" in private life. Sir Timothy had the lowest possible opinion of the progress made by civilization in his own time. The Civilization of the Future, about which Mr. Courtney talked a

great deal, seemed to Sir Timothy a nasty kind of nightmare.

It was natural, almost inevitable, that Sir Timothy should take a conservative view on the subject of the new time.

"I don't see the use of playing silly tricks with the clock," he said. "You might just as well say that I'd live ten years longer if everybody agreed to say that I'm forty-eight instead of fifty-eight. I'd still be fifty-eight in reality. It's just the same with the time. We may all make up our minds to pretend it's eight o'clock when it's really seven, but it will still be seven."

Mr. Courtney smiled in a gentle, but very annoying manner.

"My dear Sir Timothy," he said, "don't you see that what is really wanted is a complete change in the habits of the population? We've been gradually slipping into wasteful ways of living. Our expenditure on artificial light——"

"I know all about that," said Sir Timothy. "If you've said it to me once, you've said it a dozen times, and last year I did alter my clocks. But this year—hang it all! They're sticking another twenty-five minutes on it. If they go on at this rate, moving us back an extra half hour every May, we'll be living in the middle of the night before we die."

"I'm sorry to hear you taking up that question of the so-called Irish time," said Mr. Courtney. "Reactionary patriotism——"

Sir Timothy spluttered. Being an Irish gentleman, he hated to be accused of patriotism, which he held—following Dr. Johnson—to be the last refuge of a scoundrel.

"There's nothing patriotic about it," he said. "What I object to hasn't anything to do with any particular country. It's simply a direct insult to the sun."

"The sun," said Mr. Courtney, smiling more offensively than ever, "can take care of itself."

"It can," said Sir Timothy, "and does. It takes jolly good care not to rise in Dublin at the same time that it does in Greenwich, and what you're trying to do is to bluff it into saying it does. When you come to think of it, the sun doesn't rise here the same time it does in Dublin. We're a hundred and twenty miles west of Dublin, so the real time here——"

"We can't have a different time in every parish," said Mr. Courtney. "In the interests of international civilization——"

"I don't care a row of pins about international civilization. We're something like twenty minutes wrong already here. When you've made your silly change to summer time, and wiped out that twenty-

five minutes Irish time, we shall be an hour and three quarters wrong."

"At all events," said Mr. Courtney, "you'll have to do it."

"I won't."

"And when you've got accustomed to it, you'll see the advantages of the change."

Sir Timothy was profoundly irritated.

"You may do as you like," he said. "I mean to stick to the proper time. The proper time, mind you, strictly according to the sun, as it rises in this neighbourhood. I haven't worked it out exactly yet, but I should say, roughly, that there'll be two hours' difference between your watch and mine."

Mr. Courtney gasped.

"Do you mean to say that you're actually going to add on two hours?

"I'm going to take off two hours," said Sir Timothy.

Mr. Courtney thought for a moment.

"You'll be adding on those two hours," he said, "not taking them off——"

"You're an extraordinarily muddle-headed man, Courtney. Can't you see that if I call it six when you say it's eight I'm taking off——"

"You're not. The way to look at it is this: A day is twenty-four hours long. You say it's twenty-six hours. Therefore, you add on."

"I don't do anything of the sort," said Sir Timothy. "Look here, the sun rises, say, at 6 a.m. You and a lot of other silly people choose to say that it rises at 8. What I'm doing—I and the sun, Courtney—mind that. The sun's with me—— What we're doing is taking off two hours."

The argument went on for some time. Its result was that Sir Timothy and Mr. Courtney did not speak to each other again for a fortnight. Arguments, religious, political and economic, often end in this way.

During that fortnight summer time established itself, more or less, in the neighbourhood. Mr. Courtney, the local bank, the railway company, and the police observed the new time in its full intensity. The parish priest and most of the farmers took a moderate line. They sacrificed the twenty-five minutes of the original Irish time, but resisted the imposition of a whole extra hour. With them it was eight o'clock when the nine o'clock train started for Dublin. A few extremists stood out for their full rights as Irishmen, and insisted that the bank, which said it opened at 10 a.m., was really beginning business at 8.35 a.m. Sir Timothy, dragging his household with him, set up what he called actual time, and breakfasted a full two hours after the progressive party.

The practical inconvenience of these differences of opinion became obvious when Sir Timothy arrived at the Petty Sessions Court to take his seat on the Bench just as Mr. Courtney, having completed the business of the day, was going home for a rather late luncheon.

"No cases to-day?" said Sir Timothy, coldly polite.

"Oh, yes, there were, several. I've finished them off."

"But," said Sir Timothy, "it's only just the hour for beginning."

"Excuse me, it's 2 p.m."

"12 noon," said Sir Timothy.

"2 p.m.," repeated Mr. Courtney.

Sir Timothy took out his watch. The hands were together at the hour of 12. He showed it to Mr. Courtney, who grinned. Sir Timothy scowled at him and turned fiercely to a police sergeant who stood by.

"Sergeant," he said, "what time is it?"

It is not the function of the Irish police to decide great questions of State. Their business is to enforce what the higher powers, for the time being, wish the law to be. In case of any uncertainty about which power is the higher, the police occupy the uncomfortable position of neutrals. The sergeant was not quite sure whether Sir Timothy

or Mr. Courtney were the more influential man. He answered cautiously.

"There's some," he said, "who do be saying that it's one o'clock at the present time. There's others —and I'm not saying they're wrong—who are of opinion that it's half-past twelve, or about that. There's them—and some of the most respectable people is with them there—that says it's 2 p.m. If I was to be put on my oath this minute, I'd find it mortal hard to say what time it was."

"By Act of Parliament," said Mr. Courtney, "it's 2 p.m."

"In the matter of an Act of Parliament," said the sergeant, "I wouldn't like to be contradicting your honour."

Sir Timothy turned on his heel and walked away. The victory was with Mr. Courtney, but not because he had an Act of Parliament behind him. Nobody in Ireland pays much attention to Acts of Parliament. He made his point successfully, because the police did not like to contradict him. From that day on Sir Timothy made no attempt to take his seat on the Magistrates' Bench in the Court House.

Late in the summer Sir Archibald Chesney visited the neighbourhood. Sir Archibald is, of course, a great man. He is one of the people who are supposed to govern Ireland. He does not actually do so. Nobody could. But he dispenses

patronage, which, after all, is one of the most important functions of any Government. It was, for instance, in Sir Archibald's power to give Mr. Courtney a pleasant and well-paid post in Dublin, to remove him from the uncongenial atmosphere of Connaught, and set him in an office in the Lower Castle Yard. There, and in a house in Ailesbury Road—houses in Ailesbury Road are most desirable—Mr. Courtney could mingle in really intellectual society.

Mr. Courtney knew this, and invited Sir Archibald to be his guest during his stay in the neighbourhood. Sir Archibald gracefully accepted the invitation.

Then a surprising thing happened. Mr. Courtney received a very friendly letter from Sir Timothy.

"I hear," so the letter ran, "that Sir Archibald Chesney is to be with you for a few days next week. We shall be very pleased if you will bring him out to dine with us some evening. Shall we say Tuesday at 7.30? I shall not ask anyone else. Three of us will be enough for a couple of bottles of my old port."

Sir Timothy's port was very old and remarkably good. Mr. Courtney had tasted it once or twice before the days when summer time was thought of. No doubt, Sir Archibald would appreciate the port.

He might afterwards take an optimistic view of life, and feel well disposed towards Mr. Courtney. The invitation was accepted.

Sir Archibald and Mr. Courtney dressed for dinner, as gentlemen belonging to the high official classes in Ireland should and do. They put on shirts with stiff fronts and cuffs. With painful efforts they drove studs through tightly sealed buttonholes. They fastened white ties round their collars. They encased their stomachs in stiff white waistcoats. They struggled into silk-lined, silk-faced, long-tailed coats. They wrapped their necks in white silk scarves. They even put high silk hats on their heads. Their overcoats were becomingly open, for the day was warm. They took their seats in the motor. Every policeman in the village saluted them as they passed. They sped up the long, tree-lined avenue which led to Sir Timothy's house. They reached the lofty doorway, over which crouched lions upheld a shield, bearing a coat of arms.

On the lawn opposite the door Sir Timothy, his two daughters and a young man whom Mr. Courtney recognized as the police inspector, were playing tennis. It was a bright and agreeable scene. The sun shone pleasantly. Sir Timothy and the police inspector were in white flannels. The girls wore pretty cotton frocks.

Sir Archibald looked at Mr. Courtney.

"We've come the wrong day," he said, "or the wrong hour, or something."

"It *is* Tuesday," said Mr. Courtney, "and he certainly said 7.30."

"It's infernally awkward," said Sir Archibald, glancing at his clothes.

Sir Timothy crossed the lawn, swinging his tennis racket and smiling.

"Delighted to see you," he said. "I'd have asked you to come up for a game of tennis if I'd thought you'd have cared for it. Had an idea you'd be busy all day, and would rather dress at your own place. Hullo, you are dressed! A bit early, isn't it? But I'm delighted to see you."

Sir Archibald stepped slowly from the car. Men who undertake the task of governing Ireland must expect to find themselves looking like fools occasionally. But it is doubtful whether any turn of the political or administrative machine can make a man look as foolish as he feels when, elaborately dressed in evening clothes, he is suddenly set down on a sunny lawn in the middle of a group of people suitably attired for tennis. Sir Archibald, puzzled and annoyed, turned to Mr. Courtney with a frown.

"He said half-past seven," said Mr. Courtney.

"I'm delighted to see you now or at any time,

but, as a matter of fact, it's only half-past five," said Sir Timothy.

Sir Archibald looked at his watch.

"It's—surely my watch can't have gained two hours?"

"It's half-past seven," said Mr. Courtney, firmly.

"Oh, no it isn't," said Sir Timothy. "I don't dine by Act of Parliament."

Sir Archibald frowned angrily.

"We'd better go home again," he said. "We mustn't interrupt the tennis."

He climbed stiffly into the motor.

"I suppose," he said to Mr. Courtney a few minutes later, "that this is some kind of Irish joke."

Mr. Courtney explained, elaborately and fully, Sir Timothy's peculiar views about time.

"If I'd known," said Sir Archibald, "that you were taking me to dine with a lunatic, I should not have agreed to go."

Mr. Courtney recognized that his chances of promotion to a pleasant post in Dublin had vanished. The Irish Government had no use for men who place their superiors in embarrassing positions.

XII

UNITED IRELAND

"I'LL say this for old MacManaway, an honester man never lived nor what he was; and I'm sorry he's gone, so I am."

The speaker was Dan Gallaher. The occasion was the morning of the auction of old MacManaway's property. The place was the yard behind the farmhouse in which MacManaway had lived, a solitary man, without wife or child, for fifty years. Dan Gallaher held the hames of a set of harness in his hand as he spoke and critically examined the leather of the traces. It was good leather, sound and well preserved. Old MacManaway while alive liked sound things and took good care of his property.

"An honester man never lived," Dan repeated. "And I'm not saying that because the old man and me agreed together, for we didn't."

"How could you agree?" said James McNiece. "It wasn't to be expected that you would agree. There wasn't a stronger Protestant nor a greater

Orangeman in the whole country nor old MacManaway."

James McNiece turned from the examination of a cart as he spoke and gave his attention to the hames. His description of the dead man's religious and political convictions was just. No one in all the Ulster border land ever held the principle of the Orange Society more firmly or opposed any form of Home Rule more bitterly than old MacManaway. And Dan Gallaher was a Roman Catholic and a Nationalist of the extremest kind.

"They tell me," said Dan Gallaher, in a pleasant conversational tone, "that it's to be yourself, James McNiece, that's to be the head of the Orangemen in the parish now that MacManaway is gone."

James looked at him sideways out of the corners of his eyes. Dan spoke in a friendly tone, but it is never wise to give any information to "Papishes and rebels."

"The Colonel," he said, "is the Grand Master of the Orangemen in these parts."

Colonel Eden, a J.P., and the principal landlord in the parish, drove into the yard in his motor. A police sergeant slipped his pipe into his pocket, stepped forward and took the number of the Colonel's car. It has never been decided in Ireland whether motor cars may or may not be used, under the provisions of D.O.R.A., for attending auctions.

We know that the safety of the empire is compromised by driving to a race meeting. We know that the King and his Army are in no way injured by our driving to market. Attendance at an auction stands midway between pleasure and business; and the use of motors in such matters is debatable.

"It's the D.I.'s orders, sir," said the sergeant apologetically.

"All right," said the Colonel, "but if the D.I. expects me to fine myself at the next Petty Sessions he'll be disappointed."

James McNiece and Dan Gallaher touched their hats to the Colonel.

"Morning, James," said the Colonel. "Morning, Dan. Fine day for the sale, and a good gathering of people. I don't know that I ever saw a bigger crowd at an auction."

He looked round as he spoke. The whole parish and many people from outside the parish had assembled. The yard was full of men, handling and appraising the outdoor effects. Women passed in and out of the house, poked mattresses with their fingers, felt the fabrics of sheets and curtains, examined china and kitchen utensils warily.

"There's the doctor over there," said the Colonel, "looking at the stable buckets, and who's that young fellow in the yellow leggings, James?"

"I'm not rightly sure," said James McNiece,

"but I'm thinking he'll be the new D.I. from Curraghfin."

"It is him," said Dan Gallaher. "I was asking the sergeant this minute and he told me. What's more he said he was a terrible sharp young fellow."

"That won't suit you, Dan," said the Colonel. "You and your friends will have to be a bit careful before you get up another rebellion."

"It may not suit me," said Dan, "but there's others it won't suit either. Didn't I see the sergeant taking the number of your motor, Colonel, and would he be doing the like of that if the new D.I. hadn't told him?"

The Colonel laughed. As commander of a battalion of the Ulster Volunteer Force, he was fully prepared to meet Dan Gallaher on the field of battle —Dan leading the National Volunteers. He looked forward with something like pleasure to the final settlement of the Home Rule question by the ordeal of battle. In the meanwhile he and Dan Gallaher by no means hated each other, and were occasionally in full sympathy when the police or some ridiculous Government department made trouble by fussy activity.

Mr. Robnison, the auctioneer, drove up in his dogcart. He touched his hat to Colonel Eden, gave an order to his clerk and crossed the yard briskly. He twisted the cigarette he smoked into the corner

of his mouth with deft movements of his lips, waved his hand to various acquaintances and looked round him with quick, cheerful glances. No man in the country was quicker to appreciate the financial worth of a crowd. He knew before a single bid was made whether people were in a mood to spend lavishly. He found himself very well satisfied with the prospect of this particular auction. The stuff he had to sell, indoors and out, was good. The farmers were enjoying a prosperous season. They had money in their pockets which they would certainly want to spend. Mr. Robinson had visions of a percentage, his share of the proceeds, running into three figures.

He began work in a corner of the yard with a cross-cut saw. The bidding rose merrily to a point slightly higher than the cost of a similar saw new in a shop. At 23/6 Mr. Robinson knocked it down to a purchaser who seemed well satisfied. A number of small articles, scythes, barrows, spades, were sold rapidly, Mr. Robinson moving round the yard from outhouse to outhouse, surrounded by an eager crowd which pressed on him. His progress was not unlike that of a queen bee at swarming time. He made—as she makes—short flights, and always at the end of them found himself in the centre of a cluster of followers.

At about half-past twelve Mr. Robinson reached

his most important lot. He lit a fresh cigarette—his eighth—before putting up for sale a rick of hay.

"About four tons," said Mr. Robinson, "new meadow hay, well saved, saved with not a drop of rain. Gentlemen, I needn't tell you that this is a rare, under existing conditions, a unique opportunity. Hay—you know this better than I do—is at present unobtainable in the ordinary market. Now, don't disappoint me, gentlemen. Let me have a reasonable offer. Thirty pounds. Did I hear some one say fifteen pounds? Less than four pounds a ton! Now, gentlemen, really——"

But the crowd in front of Mr. Robinson knew just as well as he did that four pounds a ton is not a reasonable offer. The bids succeeded each other rapidly. The original fifteen pounds changed to twenty pounds, then to twenty-five, rose a little more slowly to thirty pounds. At thirty-two pounds the bidding hesitated. Mr. Robinson, dropping his cigarette from his mouth, urged his clients on with gusts of eloquence. There was a short spurt. The bids rose by five shillings at a time and finally stopped dead at thirty-four pounds. The hay was sold at a little over eight pounds a ton. Public interest, roused to boiling point by the sale of a whole rick of hay, cooled down a little when Mr. Robinson went on to the next lot on his list.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am now offering the

hay stored in the loft above the stable. A small lot, gentlemen, but prime hay. I offer no guarantee as to the quantity in the loft; but I should guess it at anything between ten and fifteen hundredweight."

Several of the more important farmers drew out of the crowd which surrounded Mr. Robinson. It was not worth while bidding for so small a quantity of hay. Other members of the crowd, feeling that a breathing space had been granted them, took packets of sandwiches from their pockets and sat down in one of the outhouses to refresh themselves. Mr. Robinson viewed the diminishing group of bidders with some disappointment. He was gratified to see that the new police officer from Curraghfin, a gentleman who had not so far made a single bid, crossed the yard and took a place on the steps leading to the loft. Colonel Eden, too, appeared interested in the new lot of hay. If the inspector of police and Colonel Eden began to bid against each other the hay might realize a good price.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Robinson, "shall we make a start with three pounds?"

He glanced at Colonel Eden, then at the police officer. Neither gentleman made any sign of wishing to bid. It was James McNiece who made the first offer.

"Two pounds," he said.

There was a pause.

"Two pounds," said Mr. Robinson, "two pounds. Going at two pounds. You're not going to let this hay,—more than half a ton of it—go at two pounds."

He looked appealingly at Colonel Eden and at the police officer. They were entirely unresponsive.

"And at two pounds, going——" said Mr. Robinson.

"Two-ten," said Dan Gallaher, in a quiet voice.

"Two-fifteen," said James McNiece.

Dan Gallaher, still apparently bored by the proceedings, raised the price another five shillings. James McNiece went half a crown further. Dan Gallaher, becoming slightly interested, made a jump to three pounds ten. McNiece, with an air of finality, bid four pounds. The contest began to attract attention. When the price rose to five pounds interest became lively, and those who had drawn out of the group round Mr. Robinson began to dribble back. It seemed likely that the contest was one of those, not uncommon at Irish auctions, into which personal feelings enter largely and the actual value of the article sold is little considered. There was a certain piquancy about a struggle of this kind between a prominent Orangeman like James McNiece, and Dan Gallaher, whom every-

one knew to be the leader of the Sinn Fein party.

Interest developed into actual excitement when the price rose to ten pounds. A half ton of hay never is and never has been worth ten pounds. But ten pounds was by no means the final bid.

"Mr. McNiece," said Mr. Robinson, "the bid is against you."

"Guineas," said McNiece.

"Eleven," said Dan Gallaher.

"Guineas," said McNiece.

The duet went on, McNiece capping Gallaher's pounds with a monotonous repetition of the word guineas until the price rose to twenty pounds. At that point McNiece faltered for a moment. The auctioneer, watching keenly, saw him turn half round and look at Colonel Eden. The Colonel nodded slightly, so slightly that no one except Mr. Robinson and McNiece himself saw the gesture.

"At twenty pounds," said Mr. Robinson, "going, and at twenty pounds——"

"Thirty," said McNiece.

The crowd of watchers gasped audibly. This was something outside of all experience. A man might willingly pay a few shillings, even a pound, too much for the sake of getting the better of an opponent; but to give thirty pounds for half a ton of hay—not even the natural enmity of an Orange-

man for a Sinn Feiner would account for such recklessness.

"Guineas," said Dan Gallaher.

It was his turn to say guineas now, and he repeated the word without faltering until the price rose to fifty pounds. Mr. Robinson took off his hat and wiped the sweat from his forehead. Never in all his experience of auctions had he heard bidding like this. He lit a fresh cigarette, holding the match in fingers which trembled visibly.

"You will understand, gentlemen, that I am only selling the hay, not the barn or the stable."

"Guineas," said Dan Gallaher.

It was the last bid. As he made it Colonel Eden turned and walked out of the group round the auctioneer. James McNiece took his pipe from his pocket and filled it slowly.

"The hay is yours, Mr. Gallaher," said the auctioneer.

Dan Gallaher, having secured the hay, left the yard. He found his horse, which he had tethered to a tree, and mounted. He rode slowly down the rough lane which led from the farm. At the gate leading to the high road the police sergeant stopped him.

"If you wouldn't mind waiting a minute, Mr. Gallaher," said the sergeant, "the D.I. would like to speak to you."

"What about?" said Gallaher.

The sergeant winked ponderously.

"It might be," he said, "about the hay you're just after buying."

"If he wants it," said Gallaher, "he can have it, and I'll deliver it to him at his own home at half the price I paid for it."

The District Inspector, smiling and tapping his gaiters with a riding switch, explained in a few words that he did not want the hay and did not intend to pay for it.

"I'm taking over the contents of that loft," he said, "in the name of the Government under the provisions of D.O.R.A."

"I don't know," said Gallaher, "that you've any right to be taking over what I've bought in that kind of way, and what's more you'll not be able to do it without you show me a proper order in writing, signed by a magistrate."

"If I were you," said the D.I., "I wouldn't insist on any kind of legal trial about that hay. At present there's no evidence against you, Mr. Gallaher, except that you paid a perfectly absurd price for some hay that you didn't want, and I'm not inclined to press the matter now I've got what I wanted; but if you insist on dragging the matter into Court——"

"I do not," said Gallaher.

At ten o'clock that evening Dan Gallaher and James McNiece sat together in the private room behind the bar of Sam Twining's public-house. The house was neutral ground used by Orangemen and Nationalists alike, a convenient arrangement, indeed a necessary arrangement, for there was no other public-house nearer than Curraghfin.

"Dan," said James McNiece, "I'm an Orangeman and a Protestant and a loyalist, and what I've always said about Home Rule and always will say is this:—We'll not have it and to Hell with the rebels. But I'm telling you now I'd rather you had them, papist and rebel and all as you are, than see them swept off that way by the police. And what's more, I'm not the only one says that. The Colonel was talking to me after he heard what happened, and what he said was this—'The Government of this country,' said he, meaning the police, 'is a disgrace to civilization.'"

"Give me your hand, James McNiece," said Gallaher. "Let me shake your hand to show there's no ill feeling about the way I bid against you at the sale to-day."

McNiece laid down the glass of whisky which he was raising to his lips and stretched out his hand. Gallaher grasped it and held it.

"Tell me this now, James McNiece," he said,

" for it's what I was never sure of—How many was there behind that hay? "

McNiece looked round him carefully and made sure that no third person could hear him. Neglecting no precaution he sank his voice to a whisper.

" Twenty rifles," he said, " of the latest pattern, the same as the soldiers use, and four hundred rounds of ball cartridge."

" Gosh," said Gallaher, " but we'd have done great work with them. Either your lads or mine, James McNiece, would have done great work with them. But, sure, what's the use of talking? The police has them now."

" Damn the police," said James McNiece.

XIII

OLD BIDDY AND THE REBELS

THE other servants—there were four of them —spoke of her as "the ould cat" or in moments of extreme exasperation "that divil Biddy O'Halloran." When they spoke to her they called her "Mrs. O'Halloran," or even "Mrs. O'Halloran, ma'am." Even Lady Devereux, though nominal mistress of the house, did not dare to call her "Biddy." She would as soon have addressed an archbishop as "Dickie," if, indeed, there is an archbishop whose Christian name is Richard. There is probably not a woman anywhere, however brave, who would venture to speak to Mrs. O'Halloran face to face and call her "Biddy." But a man, especially if he be young and good-looking, is in a different case. Harry Devereux called her "Biddy." He had earned the right to be familiar with his aunt's cook.

As a schoolboy Harry spent most of his holidays at his aunt's house in Dublin, and in those days Mrs. O'Halloran used to box his ears and occasionally spank him. When he grew to be a man and

was called in due course to the Irish Bar, he was often at his aunt's house and still visited Mrs. O'Halloran in her kitchen. She gave up smacking him but she still called him "Master Harry." After the outbreak of war Harry Devereux became a Second Lieutenant in the Wessex Regiment. He displayed himself in his uniform to his aunt, who admired his appearance in her placid way. He also showed himself to Mrs. O'Halloran, who snubbed him sharply.

"So it's fighting you're for now, Master Harry," she said. "Well, it's what'll suit you. It's my opinion that you're never out of mischief only when you're in something worse. It is that way with you as long as I know you and that's since you were born or pretty near. It's the Germans, is it? Well, I'm sorry for them Germans if there's many like you going to be soldiers."

Harry took this as a compliment. It was his hope that the Germans would be sorry for themselves when he got out to France with his platoon of Wessex men.

After dinner, Molly, the parlourmaid, her day's work ended, became sentimental. She said it was a terrible thing to think of all the fine men that would be killed, and maybe young Mr. Devereux among them. Mrs. O'Halloran checked her flow of feeling.

"Is it Master Harry be killed? Talk sense, can't you? Sure you couldn't kill the like of that one. Haven't I seen him, not once but a dozen times, climbing out on the roof of the house and playing himself to and fro among the chimneys. If that wasn't the death of him, and him not more than twelve years old at the time, is it likely the Germans would be able to kill him? The like of him is the same as fleas that you'd be squeezing with your finger and thumb or maybe drowning in a basin of water. You know well they'd be hopping over you after the same as before."

Molly sniffed. It was not wise to argue with "Ould Biddy," who had a talent for forcible speech.

Mrs. O'Halloran had the best right in the world to the free use of her tongue. She was a really good cook. She had satisfied Sir Joseph Devereux while he lived. She satisfied Lady Devereux afterwards. And Lady Devereux appreciated good cooking. Her husband dead, her three daughters safely married, she had leisure to enjoy eating and had money enough to pay for the best which the Dublin markets provided. Next to good food Lady Devereux valued peace and the absence of worry. Mrs. O'Halloran enjoyed strife and liked a strenuous life. She took all the annoyances of the household on herself, and when they proved too few for her, created unnecessary worry for herself by

harassing the maids. Lady Devereux slept untroubled at night, rose late in the morning, found all things very much to her liking, and grew comfortably fat.

For eight months of the year, from October till the end of May, Lady Devereux lived in one of the fine Georgian houses which are the glory of the residential squares of Dublin. It was a corner house, rather larger than the others in the square, with more light and more air, because its position gave it a view up and down two streets as well as across the lawn which formed the centre of the square.

Before the war Harry Devereux used to say that his aunt's house was the best in Dublin for a dance. It pained him to see its possibilities wasted. After receiving his commission he looked at the world with the eye of a soldier and gave it as his opinion that the house occupied the finest strategic position in Dublin. There was not much chance of persuading plump old Lady Devereux to give a ball. There seemed even less chance of her home ever being used as a fortress. But fate plays strange tricks with us and our property, especially in Ireland. It happened that Lady Devereux' house was occupied more or less by the soldiers of one army, and shot at with some vigour by the soldiers of another on Easter Monday, 1916. Oddly enough it was neither

the rebels nor the soldiers who earned credit by their military operations, but old Biddy O'Halloran.

Mrs. O'Halloran always enjoyed Bank holidays greatly. She did not go out, visit picture houses or parade the streets in her best clothes. She found a deeper and more satisfying pleasure in telling the younger maids what she thought of them when they asked and obtained leave to go out for the afternoon, and in making scathing remarks about their frocks and hats as they passed through the kitchen to reach the area door. On that particular Easter Monday she was enjoying herself thoroughly. A kitchenmaid—she was new to the household or she would not have done it—had asked Lady Devereux' permission to go out for the afternoon and evening. She got what she asked for. Everybody who asked Lady Devereux for anything got it as a matter of course. The kitchenmaid ought to have made her application through Mrs. O'Halloran. It is the rule in all services that remote authorities must be approached only through the applicant's immediate superiors. Mrs. O'Halloran took her own way of impressing this on the kitchenmaid.

"I suppose now," she said, "that you'll be trapsing the streets of Dublin in the new pink blouse that you spent your last month's wages on?"

That was exactly what the kitchenmaid meant to do. Mrs. O'Halloran looked the girl over critically.

"I don't know," she said, "that I ever seen a girl that would look worse in a pink blouse than yourself. The face that's on you is the colour of a dish of mashed turnips, and the pink blouse will make it worse, if worse can be."

The kitchenmaid was a girl of some spirit. She felt inclined to cry, but she pulled herself together and snorted instead.

"I suppose," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "that you'll be looking out for a young man to keep you company?"

The kitchenmaid did, in fact, hope to walk about with a young man; but she denied this.

"I'll be looking for no such thing," she said.

"It's well for ou then," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "for I'm thinking you'd look a long while before you found one. It's very little sense men has, the best of them, but I never met one yet that hadn't more sense than to go after a girl like you. If you were any good for any mortal thing a man might be content to marry you in spite of your face; but the way you are, not fit to darn your own stockings, let alone sew for a man, or cook the way he could eat what you put before him, it would be a queer one that would walk the same

side of the street with you, pink blouse or no pink blouse."

The kitchenmaid, though a girl of spirit, was still young. She was washing potatoes in the scullery while Mrs. O'Halloran spoke to her. Two large tears dropped from her eyes into the sink. Mrs. O'Halloran smiled.

Then Molly, the parlourmaid, flung open the kitchen door and rushed to Mrs. O'Halloran. Her face was flushed with excitement and terror. Her eyes were staring. She was panting. Her nice frilly cap was over one ear. She held her apron crumpled into a ball and clutched tightly in her hand.

"It's murdered we'll be, killed and murdered and worse! There's them in the house with guns and all sorts that'll ruin and destroy everything that's in it. The mistress is dead this minute and it's me they're after now. What'll we do at all, at all?"

The kitchenmaid, stirred from her private grief by the news, left her potatoes and came to the kitchen. She and Molly clung to each other.

"It's the Sinn Feiners," she said, "and they're out for blood."

"Where's the police?" said Molly. "What good is the police that they wouldn't be here and us being murdered?"

"It's blood they want," said the kitchenmaid, "and it's blood they'll have."

"Molly," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "is there men in the house or is there not? Stop your bawling now, and tell me.'

"There is, there is," said Molly, "with guns and cannons and knives. Glory be to God, but I never thought to die this way. What'll we do at all, at all? Would it be any good hiding?"

Mrs. O'Halloran, with cool deliberation, shifted the position of two pots on the kitchen range. Then she wiped her hands on her apron.

"It's your place to attend the door and not mine, Molly," she said, "but if you're afeard. . . ."

She looked scornfully at the two girls and left the kitchen.

In the hall a young man stood just inside the door on the mat. He wore a greenish-grey uniform and carried a rifle. Across his chest was a bandolier. He looked uncomfortable, like a man who finds himself unexpectedly in a public place when wearing a fancy dress. The door was wide open. On the steps outside were two other young men. They also wore uniforms and carried rifles.

"Now what may you be wanting?" said Mrs. O'Halloran.

The man on the mat—he was really little more than a boy—fumbled in one pocket after another.

His uniform, like that of the British soldier, had a good many pockets. Finally he drew out a sheet of paper.

"This is my authority," he said, "from the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic."

He handed the paper to Mrs. O'Halloran.

"If it's a collection you're making for the Irish Language Fund," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "her ladyship gave half a crown last week to one of yees, and she'll give no more, so you can take yourselves off out of this as quick as you like."

"We are not collectors," said the young man, with dignity.

"Whether you are not, it's what you look," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "dressed up in them clothes, with your toy guns and all. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

The suggestion that his rifle was not a real weapon roused the spirit of the young man.

"In the name of the Irish Republic," he said, "I take possession of this house for military purposes."

"Musha, but that's fine talk," said Mrs. O'Halloran. "Will nothing do you, only military purposes?"

"We shall do no harm to the inmates or the contents of the house," said the young man.

"You will not, for you won't be let."

"But I demand free entrance to the upper storeys for myself and my men."

He turned to the two boys on the steps outside the door.

"Enter," he said, "and follow me."

"Will you wipe your boots on the mat," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "and not be carrying all the mud of the streets into the house with you. Do you think the girls that does be here has nothing to do only to be sweeping carpets and polishing floors after the likes of you?"

The army of the Irish Republic has had many crimes laid to its charge; but it has not been said that its soldiers were guilty of any needless discourtesy to the inhabitants of the houses of which they took possession. The three young men wiped their boots on Lady Devereux' doormat with elaborate care. Mrs. O'Halloran watched them critically.

"Is it the police you're out after with them guns?" she said. "It's a pity, so it is, to see fine young fellows like you mixing yourselves up with that foolishness. Sure they'll get you at the latter end, and you'll be had up in Court."

The leader of the little party of Sinn Feiners was not inclined to discuss the future prospects of the insurrection with Mrs. O'Halloran. He moved across the hall towards the staircase, followed by

his two young men. They walked delicately, stepping carefully from one to another of the rugs which lay on the floor and avoiding the polished boards. They were courteous and considerate rebels.

"Will nothing but the front stairs suit you?" said Mrs. O'Halloran. "Cock you up, indeed, the likes of you, that never was in a lady's house before. The back stairs is good enough for me, so I'm thinking it's good enough for you. Come along with you now."

She led them past the foot of the great staircase and through a swing door covered with green baize. That door, such was the fancy of the designer of Lady Devereux' house, concealed another, a very solid door, made after the Georgian fashion, of thick mahogany. The baize-covered door had a spring on it so that it swung shut of itself. Mrs. O'Halloran held it open with one hand. With the other she turned the handle of the solid door beyond.

"Will you come along now," she said to the three young men, "and take care you don't be scratching the polish off the door with them guns you're so proud of?"

They were foolish rebels, those three. They were young and, though Irish, this was the first time they had taken part in an insurrection. They had marched forth to garrison Lady Devereux'

house expecting much, hand-to-hand fighting perhaps in the hall, the tears and hysterics of terrified women, revolver shots from outraged loyalists. Anything of that sort, anything heroic they were prepared for. Old Biddy O'Halloran, with her humorous eyes and her ready tongue, took them aback. They walked through the mahogany door meekly enough.

They found themselves in a small cloak room. There was a wash-hand basin and a couple of towels in one corner. A pile of carriage rugs lay on a shelf. Some waterproof coats hung from pegs. There were three umbrellas in a stand. There was one small window which looked out on a back yard and was heavily barred. There was not the smallest sign of a staircase leading to the upper storey of the house or to anywhere else.

A nervous and excitable woman who had trapped three young men would have made haste to lock them in. Mrs. O'Halloran was in no hurry at all. The key of the mahogany door was on the inside of the lock. She took it out deliberately.

"There you stay," she said, "the three of vous, till you've sense enough to go back to your homes, and it's your mothers will be thankful to me this day for keeping you out of mischief. Listen to me now before I lock the door."

She fitted the key into the outside of the lock and half closed the door while she spoke.

"If I hear a word out of your heads or if there's any shooting of them guns, or if you start cracking and banging on that door, or kicking up any sort of a noise that might disturb her ladyship, I'll give you neither bite nor sup, not if I have to keep you here for a week, so be good now and mind what I'm telling you."

She shut the door and turned the key in the lock.

At the head of the kitchen stairs stood Molly and the kitchenmaid.

"Will I run for the police?" said the kitchenmaid. "Sure I wouldn't be afeard to do it if Molly would come with me."

"You'll run down to the scullery," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "and you'll go on washing them potatoes, and Molly along with you. That's all the running either the one or the other of you will do this day."

"Her ladyship's bell is ringing," said Molly. "Will I not go to her? It could be she's not dead yet and might be wanting help."

"It's little help you'd give her if she was wanting it, you with your cap on your ear, instead of the top of your head, and your apron like a wrung dishclout. I wonder you're not ashamed to be seen.

Get along with you down to the kitchen and stay there. Anything that's wanted for her ladyship I'll do myself."

Lady Devereux was in her morning room, a pleasant sunny apartment which looked out on the square. The day was warm, but Lady Devereux was an old woman. She sat in front of a bright fire. She sat in a very deep soft chair with her feet on a footstool. She had a pile of papers and magazines on a little table beside her. She neither stirred nor looked up when Mrs. O'Halloran entered the room.

"Molly," she said, "I heard some men talking in the hall. I wish they wouldn't make so much noise."

Mrs. O'Halloran cleared her throat and coughed. Lady Devereux looked up.

"Oh," she said, "it's not Molly. It's you, Mrs. O'Halloran. Then I suppose it must be plumbers."

The inference was a natural one. Mrs. O'Halloran always dealt with plumbers when they came. She was the only person in the house who could deal with plumbers.

"Or perhaps some men about the gas," said Lady Devereux. "I hope they won't want to come in here."

The pleasant quiet life in Lady Devereux' house was occasionally broken by visits from plumbers

and gas men. No one, however wealthy or easy-going, can altogether escape the evils which have grown up with our civilization.

"It's not plumbers, my lady," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "nor it isn't gas men. It's Sinn Feiners."

"Dear me, I suppose they want a subscription. My purse is on my writing table, Mrs. O'Halloran. Will five shillings be enough? I think I ought to give them something. I'm always so sorry for people who have to go round from house to house collecting."

"I have the three of them in the cloakroom downstairs and the key turned on them," said Mrs. O'Halloran.

It is quite possible that Lady Devereux might have expressed some surprise at this drastic way of treating men, presumably well-meaning men, who came to ask for money. Before she spoke again she was startled by the sound of several rifle shots fired in the street outside her house. She was not much startled, not at all alarmed. A rifle fired in the open air at some distance does not make a very terrifying sound.

"Dear me," she said, "I wonder what that is. It sounds very like somebody shooting."

Mrs. O'Halloran went over to the window and opened it. There was a narrow iron balcony outside. She stepped on to it.

"It's soldiers, my lady," she said. "They're in the square."

"I suppose it must be on account of the war," said Lady Devereux.

She had learned—before Easter, 1916, everybody had learned—to put down all irregularities to the war. Letters got lost in the post. The price of sugar rose. Men married unexpectedly, "on account of the war."

"But I don't think they ought to be allowed to shoot in the square," she added. "It might be dangerous."

It was dangerous. A bullet—it must have passed very close to Mrs. O'Halloran—buried itself in the wall of the morning room. A moment later another pierced a mirror which hung over Lady Devereux' writing table. Mrs. O'Halloran came into the room again and shut the window.

"You'd think now," she said "that them fellows were shooting at the house."

"I wish you'd go down and tell them to stop," said Lady Devereux. "Of course I know we ought to do all we can to help the soldiers, such gallant fellows, suffering so much in this terrible war. Still I do think they ought to be more careful where they shoot."

Mrs. O'Halloran went quietly down the two flights of stairs which led from the morning-room

to the ground floor of the house. She had no idea of allowing herself to be hustled into any undignified haste either by rebels or troops engaged in suppressing the rebellion. When she reached the bottom of the stairs she stopped. Her attention was held by two different noises. The Sinn Feiners were battering the door of their prison with the butts of their rifles. Molly, the kitchenmaid and Lady Devereux' two other servants were shrieking on the kitchen stairs. Mrs. O'Halloran dealt with the rebels first. She opened the baize-covered door and put her mouth to the keyhole of the other.

"Will yous keep quiet or will yous not?" she said. "There's soldiers outside the house this minute waiting for the chance to shoot you, and they'll do it, too, if you don't sit down and behave yourselves. Maybe it's that you want. If it is you're going the right way about getting it. But if you've any notion of going home to your mothers with your skins whole you'll stay peaceable where you are. Can you not hear the guns?"

The three rebels stopped battering the door and listened. The rifle fire began to slacken. No more than an occasional shot was to be heard. The fighting had died down. It was too late for the prisoners to take any active part in it. They began to consider the future. They made up their minds to take the advice given them and stay quiet.

Mrs. O'Halloran went to the head of the kitchen stairs. The four maids were huddled together. Mrs. O'Halloran descended on them. She took Molly, who was nearest to her, by the shoulders and shook her violently. The housemaid and Lady Devereux' maid fled at once to the coal cellar. The kitchenmaid sat down and sobbed.

"If there's another sound out of any of yous," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "it'll be the worse for you after. Isn't it enough for one day to have three young fellows in the house trying to get shot, and soldiers outside trying to shoot them, and every sort of divilment in the way of a row going on, without having a pack of girls bellowing and bawling on the kitchen stairs? It's mighty fond you are, the whole of you, of dressing yourselves up, in pink blouses and the like" (she looked angrily at the kitchenmaid), "and running round the streets to see if you can find a man to take up with you. And now when there's men enough outside and in, nothing will do but to be screeching. But sure girls is like that, and where's the use of talking?"

Mrs. O'Halloran might have said more. She felt inclined to say a good deal more but she was interrupted by a loud knocking at the hall door.

"I dursent go to it," said Molly. "I dursent. You wouldn't know who might be there nor what they might do to you."

"Nobody's asking you to go," said Mrs. O'Halloran.

She went to the door herself and opened it. A sergeant and eight men were on the steps.

"And what may you be wanting?" said Mrs. O'Halloran. "What right have you to come battering and banging at the door of her ladyship's house the same as if it was a public-house and you trying to get in after closing time? Be off out of this, now, the whole of you. I never seen such foolishness."

"My orders are to search the house," said the sergeant; "rebels have been firing on us from the roof."

"There's no rebels been firing out of this house," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "and what's more——"

"My orders," said the sergeant.

"There's no orders given in this house," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "only mine and maybe her ladyship's at odd times."

She need scarcely have mentioned Lady Devereux. An order from her was a very exceptional thing.

"Our officer——" said the sergeant. "Private Beggs, go and report to the officer that we are refused admission to this house."

Private Beggs turned to obey the order. The officer in charge of the party came out of the door

of a house half-way along the side of the square. Mrs. O'Halloran recognised him. It was Second Lieutenant Harry Devereux.

"Master Harry," she called, "Master Harry, come here at once. Is it you that's been raising ructions about the square? Shooting and destroying and frightening decent people into fits? Faith, I might have known it was you. If there's divilment going you'd be in it."

Harry Devereux, intensely conscious of his responsibility as commander of men in a real fight, reached the bottom of the steps which led to his aunt's door.

"Enter the house, sergeant," he said, "and search it."

Mrs. O'Halloran stood right in the middle of the doorway. The sergeant looked at her doubtfully and hesitated.

"Come up out of that, Master Harry," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "and don't be trying to hide behind the sergeant. It's no wonder you're ashamed of yourself, but I see you plain enough. Come here now till I talk to you."

The sergeant grinned. Private Beggs, who was behind his officer, laughed openly.

"Was there nowhere else in the world for you to have a battle—if a battle was what you wanted," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "only in front of your aunt's

house? Many and many's the time I've smacked you for less than what you've done to-day. Isn't there bullets in her ladyship's morning-room? Isn't there a grand looking-glass in a gold frame gone to smithers with your shooting? Isn't Molly and the other girls screeching this minute down in the coal cellar, for fear you'll kill them, and now nothing will do you seemingly only to be tramping all over the house. Search it, moya, search it! But you'll not be let, Master Harry; neither you nor the sergeant nor any of the rest of you."

Second Lieutenant Harry Devereux pulled himself together and made an effort to save what was left of his dignity. He had led his men across the square under a shower of rebel bullets from the roofs of the houses. He had taken cool advantage of all possible cover. He had directed his men's fire till he drove the rebels from their shelters. No one could say of him that he was other than a gallant officer. But his heart failed him when he was face to face with his aunt's cook.

"I think we needn't search this house, sergeant," he said. "I know it."

"If you'd like to come back in an hour or two, Master Harry," said Mrs. O'Halloran, "I'll have a bit of dinner ready for you, and I wouldn't say but there might be something for the sergeant and his men. It's what her ladyship is always saying that

we ought to do the best we can for the lads that's fighting for us against the Germans—so long as they behave themselves. But mind this now, sergeant, if you do look in in the course of the evening there must be no carrying on with the girls. The Lord knows they're giddy enough without you upsetting them worse."

That night, after dark, three young Sinn Feiners climbed the wall at the end of Lady Devereux' back yard and dropped into a narrow lane beyond it. A fortnight later Mrs. O'Halloran received a large parcel containing three suits of clothes, the property of Second Lieutenant Devereux, left by him in his aunt's house when he first put on his uniform. They were carefully brushed and folded, in no way the worse for having been worn by strangers for one night.

In the bottom of Mrs. O'Halloran's trunk there are three rebel uniforms. And on the top of the cupboard in her room are three rifles, made in Germany.

XIV

CIVILIZED WAR

"THIS," said Captain Power, "is an utterly rotten war."

The rain was dripping through the roof of the shed which had been allotted to Power as a billet. The mud outside was more than ankle deep. The damp inside was chilly and penetrating. Ned Waterhouse, a Second Lieutenant, the only other occupant of the shed, looked up from an old newspaper which he was trying to read.

"All wars are rotten," he said.

"Not at all," said Power; "a properly conducted war, run in a decent way by civilized men is quite agreeable, rather fun, in fact. Now the last in which I was mixed up was rather fun."

Waterhouse eyed Power suspiciously. He suspected that he was being made the victim of some kind of joke. Waterhouse was an Englishman and it was not of his own desire that he was an officer in the Hibernian Light Infantry. He felt himself out of place among Irishmen whom he never quite understood. He was particularly distrustful of Captain Power. Power was an expert in the art

of "pulling the legs" of innocent people. Waterhouse had several times found himself looking like a fool without knowing exactly why.

"What I call a civilized war," said Power, "is waged in fine weather for one thing, and men have a chance of keeping clean. The combatants show some regard for the other side's feelings and don't try to make things as nasty for each other as they can. The business is done in a picturesque way, with flags and drums and speeches. There are negotiations and flags of truce and mutual respect for gallant foemen—instead of this d——d cold-blooded, scientific slaughter."

"No war was ever like that," said Waterhouse. "Novelists and other silly fools write about war as if it were a kind of sport. But it never was really."

"The last war I was in, was," said Power.

"I don't believe you ever were in a war before," said Waterhouse. "You're not old enough to have gone to South Africa."

"All the same I was in a war," said Power, "though I didn't actually fight. I was wounded at the time and couldn't. But I was there. Our Irish war at Easter, 1916."

"That footy little rebellion," said Waterhouse.

"You may call it what you like," said Power, "but it was a much better war than this one from

every point of view, except mere size. It was properly conducted on both sides."

"I suppose you want to tell a yarn about it," said Waterhouse, "and if you do I can't stop you; but you needn't suppose I'll believe a word you say."

"The truth of this narrative," said Power, "will compel belief even in the most sceptical mind. I happened to be at home at the time on sick leave, wounded in the arm. Those were the days when one got months of sick leave, before some rotten ass invented convalescent homes for officers and kept them there. I had three months' leave that time and I spent it with my people in Ballymahon."

"The whole of it?" said Waterhouse. "Good Lord!"

"You'd have spent it in the Strand Palace Hotel, I suppose, running in and out of music halls, but I prefer the simple joys of country life, though I couldn't shoot or ride properly on account of my arm. Still I could watch the sunset and listen to the birds singing, which I like. Besides, I was absolutely stoney at the time, and couldn't have stayed in London for a week. As it happened, it was a jolly good thing I was there. If I'd been in London I'd have missed that war. Perhaps I'd better begin by telling you the sort of place Ballymahon is."

"You needn't," said Waterhouse. "I spent three months in camp in County Tipperary. I know those dirty little Irish towns. Twenty public-houses. Two churches, a workhouse and a police barrack."

"In Ballymahon there is also a court house and our ancestral home. My old dad is the principal doctor in the neighbourhood. He lives on one side of the court house. The parish priest lives on the other. You must grasp these facts in order to understand the subsequent military operations. The only other thing you really must know is that Ballymahon lies in a hole with hills all round it, like the rim of a saucer. Well, on Monday afternoon, Easter Monday, the enemy, that is to say, the Sinn Feiners, marched in and took possession of the town. It was a most imposing sight, Waterhouse. There were at least eight hundred of them. Lots of them had uniforms. Most of them had flags. There were two bands and quite a lot of rifles. The cavalry——"

"You can't expect me to believe in the cavalry," said Waterhouse. "But I say, supposing they really came, didn't the loyal inhabitants put up any kind of resistance?"

"My old dad," said Power, "was the only loyal inhabitant, except four policemen. You couldn't expect four policemen to give battle to a whole

army. They shut themselves up in their barrack and stayed there. My dad, being a doctor, was of course a non-combatant. I couldn't do anything with my arm in a sling, so there was no fight at all."

"I suppose the next thing they did was loot the public-houses," said Waterhouse, "and get gloriously drunk?"

"Certainly not. I told you that our war was properly conducted. There was no looting in Ballymahon and I never saw a drunken man the whole time. If those Sinn Feiners had a fault it was over-respectability. I shouldn't care to be in that army myself."

"I believe that," said Waterhouse. "It's the first thing in this story that I really have believed."

"They used to march about all day in the most orderly manner, and at night there were sentries at every street corner who challenged you in Irish. Not knowing the language, I thought it better to stay indoors. But my dad used to wander about. He's a sporting old bird and likes to know what's going on. Well, that state of things lasted three days and we all began to settle down comfortably for the summer. Except that there were no newspapers or letters there wasn't much to complain about. In fact, you'd hardly have known there was a war on. It wasn't the least like this beastly country where everyone destroys everything he

sees, and wretched devils have to live in rabbit-holes. In Ballymahon we lived in houses with beds and chairs and looked after ourselves properly. Then one morning—it must have been Friday—news came in that a lot of soldiers were marching on the town. Some country girls saw them and came running in to tell us. I must say for the Sinn Fein commander that he kept his head. His name was O'Farrelly and he called himself a Colonel. He sent out scouts to see where the soldiers were and how many there were. Quite the proper thing to do. I didn't hear exactly what the scouts reported; but that evening O'Farrelly came round to our house to talk things over with my dad."

"I thought you said your father was a loyal man."

"So he is. There isn't a loyaller man in Ireland. You'd know that if you'd ever seen him singing 'God Save the King.' He swells out an inch all over when he's doing it."

"If he's as loyal as all that," said Waterhouse, "he wouldn't consult with rebels."

"My dad, though loyal, has some sense, and so, as it happened, had O'Farrelly. Neither one nor the other of them wanted to see a battle fought in the streets of Ballymahon. You've seen battles, Waterhouse, and you know what they're like. Messy things. You can understand my father's

feelings. O'Farrelly was awfully nice about it. He said that the people of Ballymahon, including my father and even the police, were a decent lot, and he'd hate to see licentious English soldiers rioting through the streets of the town. His idea was that my dad should use his influence with the C.O. of the troops and get him to march his men off somewhere else, so as to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. O'Farrelly promised he wouldn't go after them or molest them in any way if they left the neighbourhood. My dad said he couldn't do that and even if he could, he wouldn't. He suggested that O'Farrelly should take his army away. O'Farrelly said he was out to fight and not to run away. I chipped in at that point and said he could fight just as well in a lonelier place, where there weren't any houses and no damage would be done. I said I felt pretty sure the soldiers would go after him to any bog he chose to select. O'Farrelly seemed to think there was something in the suggestion and said he'd hold a council of war and consult his officers."

"What an amazing liar you are, Power," said Waterhouse.

Captain Power took no notice of the insult. He went on with his story.

"The Council of War assembled next morning," he said, "and sat for about four hours. It might

have all day if an English officer hadn't ridden in on a motor-bike about noon. He was stopped by a sentry, of course, and said he wanted to see the C.O. of the rebel army. So the sentry blindfolded him——"

"What on earth for?"

"In civilized war," said Power severely, "envoys with flags of truce are invariably blindfolded. I told you at the start that our war was properly conducted; but you wouldn't believe me. Now you can see for yourself that it was. The sentry led that officer into the council, which was sitting in the court house. I told you, didn't I, that the court house was the rebel H.Q.?"

"You didn't mention it, but it doesn't matter."

"It does matter. And you'll see later on it's most important. Well, O'Farrelly was frightfully polite to the officer, and asked him what he wanted. The officer said that he had come to demand the unconditional surrender of the whole of the rebel army. O'Farrelly, still quite politely, said he'd rather die than surrender, and everybody present cheered. The officer said that the town was entirely surrounded and that there was a gun on top of one of the hills which would shell the place into little bits in an hour if it started firing. O'Farrelly said he didn't believe all that and accused the officer of putting up a bluff. The officer stuck to it that

what he said was true. That brought the negotiations to a dead-lock."

"Why the devil didn't they shell the place and have done with it, instead of talking?"

"That's what would happen out here," said Power. "But as I keep telling you our war was run on humane lines. After the officer and O'Farrelly had argued for half an hour my dad dropped in on them. He's a popular man in the place and I think everyone was glad to see him. He sized up the position at once and suggested the only possible way out. O'Farrelly, with a proper safe conduct, of course, was to be allowed to go and see whether the town was really surrounded, and especially whether there was a gun on top of the hill, as the officer said. That, I think you'll agree with me, Waterhouse, was a sensible suggestion and fair to both sides. But they both boggled at it. The officer said he'd no power to enter into negotiation of any kind with rebels, and that all he could do was take yes or no to his proposal of unconditional surrender. O'Farrelly seemed to think that he'd be shot, no matter what safe conducts he had. It took the poor old dad nearly an hour to talk sense into the two of them; but in the end he managed it. O'Farrelly agreed to go if the safe conduct was signed by my dad as well as the officer, and the officer agreed to take him on condition that my

dad went too to explain the situation to his colonel. I went with them just to see what would happen."

"I suppose they made O'Farrelly prisoner?" said Waterhouse.

"You are judging everybody by the standards of this infernal war," said Power. "That English colonel was a soldier and a gentleman. He stood us drinks and let O'Farrelly look at the gun. It was there all right and Ballymahon was entirely surrounded. We got back about five o'clock, with an ultimatum written out on a sheet of paper. Unless O'Farrelly and his whole army had marched out and laid down their arms by 8 p.m. the town would be shelled without further warning. You'd have thought that would have knocked the heart out of O'Farrelly, considering that he hadn't a dog's chance of breaking through. But it didn't. He became cheerfuller than I'd seen him before, and said that the opportunity he'd always longed for had come at last. His men, when he told them about the ultimatum, took the same view. They said they'd never surrender, not even if the town was shelled into dust and them buried in the ruins. That naturally didn't suit my dad—or for that matter, me. The soldiers were sure to begin by shelling the rebel H.Q. and that meant that they'd hit our house. I told you, didn't I, that it was next door to the court house? My poor dad did his best. He

talked to O'Farrelly and the rest of them till the sweat ran off him. But it wasn't the least bit of good. They simply wouldn't listen to reason. It was seven o'clock before dad gave the job up and left the court house. He was going home to make his will, but on the way he met Father Conway, the priest. He was a youngish man and a tremendous patriot, supposed to be hand-in-glove with the rebels. Dad explained to him that he had less than an hour to live and advised him to go home and bury any valuables he possessed before the shelling began. It took Father Conway about ten minutes to grasp the situation. I chipped in and explained the bracket system on which artillery works. I told him that they wouldn't begin by aiming at the court house, but would drop their first shell on his house and their next on ours, so as to get the range right. As soon as he believed that —and I had to swear it was true before he did—he took the matter up warmly and said he'd talk to O'Farrelly himself. I didn't think he'd do much good, but I went into the court house with him, just to see what he'd say. I must say for him he wasted no time. It was a quarter past seven when he began, so there wasn't much time to waste."

"'Boys,' he said, 'will you tell me straight and plain what is it you want?' O'Farrelly began a long speech about an Irish republic and things of

that kind. I sat with my watch in my hand opposite Father Conway and every now and then I pointed to the hands, so as to remind him that time was going on. At twenty-five past seven he stopped O'Farrelly and said they couldn't have an Irish republic just then—though they might later—on account of that gun. Then he asked them again to say exactly what they wanted, republics being considered a wash-out. You'd have been surprised if you heard the answer he got. Every man in the place stood up and shouted that he asked nothing better than to die for Ireland. They meant it, too. I thought it was all up and Father Conway was done. But he wasn't."

"'Who's preventing you?' he said. 'Just form fours in the square outside and you'll all be dead in less than half an hour. But if you stay here a lot of other people who don't want to die for Ireland or anything else will be killed too; along with having their homes knocked down on them.'

"Well, they saw the sense of that. O'Farrelly formed his men up outside and made a speech to them. He said if any man funked it he could stay where he was and only those who really wanted to die need go on. It was a quarter to eight when he finished talking and I was in terror of my life that there'd be some delay getting rid of the men who fell out. But there wasn't a single defaulter. Every

blessed one of those men—and most of them were only boys—did a right turn and marched out of the town in column of fours. I can tell you, Waterhouse, I didn't like watching them go. Father Conway and my dad were standing on the steps of the court house, blubbering like children."

"I suppose they weren't all killed?" said Waterhouse.

"None of them were killed," said Power. "There wasn't a shot fired. You see, when the English officer saw them march out of the town he naturally thought they'd come to surrender, and didn't fire on them."

"He couldn't possibly have thought that," said Waterhouse, "unless they laid down their arms."

"As a matter of fact," said Power, "hardly any of them had any arms, except hockey sticks, and the Colonel thought they'd piled them up somewhere. He seems to have been a decent sort of fellow. He made O'Farrelly and a few more prisoners, and told the rest of them to be off home."

"Ireland," said Waterhouse, "must be a d——d queer country."

"It's the only country in Europe," said Power, "which knows how to conduct war in a civilized way. Now if a situation of that sort turned up out here there'd be bloodshed."

"I suppose O'Farrelly was hanged afterwards?" said Waterhouse.

"No, he wasn't."

"Shot, then? Though I should think hanging is the proper death for a rebel."

"Nor shot," said Power. "He is alive still and quite well. He's going about the country making speeches. He was down in Ballymahon about a fortnight ago and called on my dad to thank him for all he'd done during the last rebellion. He inquired after me in the kindest way. The old dad was greatly touched, especially when a crowd of about a thousand men, all O'Farrelly's original army with a few new recruits, gathered round the house and cheered, first for an Irish republic and then for dad. He made them a little speech and told them I'd got my company and was recommended for the M.C. When they heard that they cheered me like anything and then shouted 'Up the Rebels!' for about ten minutes."

"I needn't tell you," said Waterhouse, "that I don't believe a word of that story. If I did I'd say——"

He paused for a moment.

"I'd say that Ireland——"

"Yes," said Power, "that Ireland——"

"I'd say that Ireland is a country of lunatics," said Waterhouse, "and there ought to be an Irish Republic. I can't think of anything to say worse than that."

XV

THE MERMAID

WE were on our way home from Inishmore, where we had spent two days; Peter O'Flaherty among his relatives—for everyone on the island was kin to him—I among friends who give me a warm welcome when I go to them. The island lies some seventeen miles from the coast. We started on our homeward sail with a fresh westerly wind. Shortly after midday it backed round to the north and grew lighter. At five o'clock we were stealing along very gently through calm water with our mainsail boom out against the shroud. The jib and foresail were drooping in limp folds. An hour later the mainsheet was hanging in the water and the boat drifted with the tide. Peter, crouching in the fore part of the cockpit, hissed through his clenched teeth, which is the way in which he whistles for a wind. He glanced all round the horizon, searching for signs of a breeze. His eyes rested finally on the sun, which lay low among some light, fleecy clouds. He gave it as his opinion that when it reached the point of setting it

"might draw a light air after it from the eastward." For that it appeared we were to wait. I shrank from toil with the heavy sweeps. So, I am sure, did Peter, who is a good man in a boat but averse from unnecessary labour. And there was really no need to row. The tide was carrying us homeward, and our position was pleasant enough. Save for the occasional drag of a block against the horse we had achieved unbroken silence and almost perfect peace,

We drifted slowly past Carrigeen Glos, a low, sullen line of rocks. A group of cormorants, either gorged with mackerel fry or hopeless of an evening meal, perched together at one end of the reef, and stared at the setting sun. A few terns swept round and round overhead, soaring or sliding downwards with easy motion. A large seal lay basking on a bare rock just above the water's edge. I pointed it out to Peter, and he said it was a pity I had not got my rifle with me. I did not agree with him. If I had brought the rifle Peter would have insisted on my shooting at the seal. I should certainly not have hit it on purpose, for I am averse from injuring gentle creatures; but I might perhaps have killed or wounded it by accident, for my shooting is very uncertain. In any case I should have broken nature's peace, and made a horrible commotion. Perhaps the seal heard Peter's remark or divined his

feeling of hostility. It flopped across the rock and slid gracefully into the sea. We saw it afterwards swimming near the boat, looking at us with its curiously human, tender eyes.

"A man might mistake it for a mermaid," I said.

"He'd have to be a fool altogether that would do the like," said Peter.

He was scornful; but the seal's eyes were human. They made me think of mermaids.

"Them ones," said Peter, "is entirely different from seals. You might see a seal any day in fine weather. They're plenty. But the other ones—— But sure you wouldn't care to be hearing about them."

"I've heard plenty about them," I said, "but it was all poetry and nonsense. You know well enough, Peter, that there's no such thing as a mermaid."

Peter filled his pipe slowly and lit it. I could see by the way he puffed at it that he was full of pity and contempt for my scepticism.

"Come now," I said: "did you ever see a mermaid?"

"I did not," said Peter, "but my mother was acquainted with one. That was in Inishmore, where I was born and reared."

I waited. The chance of getting Peter to tell an interesting story is to wait patiently. Any attempt

to goad him on by asking questions is like striking before a fish is hooked. The chance of getting either story or fish is spoiled.

"There was a young fellow in the island them times," said Peter, "called Anthony O'Flaherty. A kind of uncle of my father's he was, and a very fine man. There wasn't his equal at running or lepping, and they say he was terrible daring on the sea. That was before my mother was born, but she heard tell of what he did. When she knew him he was like an old man, and the heart was gone out of him."

At this point Peter stopped. His pipe had gone out. He relit it with immense deliberation. I made a mistake. By way of keeping the conversation going I asked a question.

"Did he see a mermaid?"

"He did," said Peter, "and what's more he married one."

There Peter stopped again abruptly, but with an air of finality. He had, so I gathered, told me all he was going to tell me about the mermaid. I had blundered badly in asking my question. I suppose that some note of unsympathetic scepticism in my tone suggested to Peter that I was inclined to laugh at him. I did my best to retrieve my position. I sat quite silent and stared at the peak of the mainsail. The block on the horse rattled

occasionally. The sun's rim touched the horizon. At last Peter was reassured and began again.

"It was my mother told me about it, and she knew, for many's the time she did be playing with the young lads, her being no more than a little girleen at the time. Seven of them there was, and the second eldest was the one age with my mother. That was after herself left him."

"Herself" was vague enough; but I did not venture to ask another question. I took my eyes off the peak of the mainsail and fixed them inquiringly on Peter. It was as near as I dared go to asking a question.

"Herself," said Peter, "was one of them ones."

He nodded sideways over the gunwale of the boat. The sea, though still calm, was beginning to be moved by that queer restlessness which comes on it at sunset. The tide eddied in mysteriously oily swirls. The rocks to the eastward of us had grown dim. A gull flew by overhead uttering wailing cries. The graceful terns had disappeared. A cormorant, flying so low that its wing-tips broke the water, sped across our bows to some far resting-place. I fell into a mood of real sympathy with stories about mermaids. I think Peter felt the change which had come over me.

"Anthony O'Flaherty," said Peter, "was a young man when he saw them first. It was in the

little bay back west of the island, and my mother never rightly knew what he was doing there in the middle of the night; but there he was. It was the bottom of a low spring tide, and there's rocks off the end of the bay that's uncovered at the ebb of the springs. You've maybe seen them."

I have seen them, and Peter knew it well. I have seen more of them than I want to. There was an occasion when Peter and I lay at anchor in that bay, and a sudden shift of wind set us to beating out at three o'clock in the morning. The rocks were not uncovered then, but the waves were breaking fiercely over them. We had little room for tacking, and I am not likely to forget the time we went about a few yards to windward of them. The stretch of wild surf under our lee looked ghastly white in the dim twilight of the dawn. Peter knew what I was thinking.

"It was calm enough that night Anthony O'Flaherty was there," he said, "and there was a moon shining, pretty near a full moon, so Anthony could see plain. Well, there was three of them in it, and they playing themselves."

"Mermaids?"

This time my voice expressed full sympathy. The sea all round us was rising in queer round little waves, though there was no wind. The boom snatched at the blocks as the boat rocked. The

sail was ghostly white. The vision of a mermaid would not have surprised me greatly.

"The beautifullest ever was seen," said Peter, "and neither shift nor shirt on them, only just themselves, and the long hair of them. Straight it was and black, only for a taste of green in it. You wouldn't be making a mistake between the like of them and seals, not if you'd seen them right the way Anthony O'Flaherty did."

Peter made this reflection a little bitterly. I was afraid the recollection of my unfortunate remark about seals might have stopped him telling the story, but it did not.

"Once Anthony had seen them," he said, "he couldn't rest content without he'd be going to see them again. Many a night he went and saw neither sight nor light of them, for it was only at spring tides that they'd be there, on account of the rocks not being uncovered any other time. But at the bottom of the low springs they were there right enough, and sometimes they'd be swimming in the sea and sometimes they'd be sitting on the rocks. It was wonderful the songs they'd sing—like the sound of the sea set to music was what my mother told me, and she was told by them that knew. The people did be wondering what had come over Anthony, for he was different like from what he had been, and nobody knew what took him out of his

house in the middle of the night at the spring tides. There was a girl that they had laid down for him to marry, and Anthony had no objection to her before he seen them ones; but after he had seen them he wouldn't look at the girl. She had a middling good fortune too, but sure he didn't care about that."

I could understand Anthony's feelings. The air of wind which Peter had promised, drawn from its cave by the lure of the departing sun, was filling our head-sails. I hauled in the main-sheet gently hand over hand and belayed it. The boat slipped quietly along close-hauled. The long line of islands which guards the entrance of our bay lay dim before use. Over the shoulder of one of them I could see the lighthouse, still a distinguishable patch of white against the looming grey of the land. The water rippled mournfully under our bows and a long pale wake stretched astern from our counter. "Fortune," banked money, good heifers and even enduringly fruitful fields seemed very little matters to me then. They must have seemed still less, far less, to Anthony O'Flaherty after he had seen those white sea-maidens with their green-black hair.

"There was a woman on the island in those times," said Peter, "a very aged woman, and she had a kind of plaster which she made which cured the cancer, drawing it out by the roots, and she

could tell what was good for the chin cough, and the women did like to have her with them when their children was born, she being knowledgable in them matters. I'm told the priests didn't like her, for there was things she knew which it mightn't be right that anyone would know, things that's better left to the clergy. Whether she guessed what was the matter with Anthony, or whether he up and told her straight my mother never heard. It could be that he told her, for many a one used to go to her for a charm when the butter wouldn't come, or a cow, maybe, was pining; so it wouldn't surprise me if Anthony went to her."

Peter crept aft. He took a pull on the jib-sheet and belayed it again; but I do not believe that he really cared much about the set of the sail. That was his excuse. He wanted to be nearer to me. There is something in stories like this, told in dim twilight, with dark waters sighing near at hand, which makes men feel the need of close human companionship. Peter seated himself on the floor-boards at my feet, and I felt a certain comfort in the touch of his arm on my leg.

"Well," he went on, "according to the old hag—and what she said was true enough, however she learnt it—them ones doesn't go naked all the time, but only when they're playing themselves on the rocks at low tide, the way Anthony seen them.

Mostly they have a kind of cloak that they wear, and they take the same cloaks off of them when they're up above the water and they lay them down on the rocks. If so be that a man could put his hand on e'er a cloak, the one that owned it would have to follow him whether she wanted to or not. If it was to the end of the world she'd have to follow him, or to Spain, or to America, or wherever he might go. And what's more, she'd have to do what he bid her, be the same good or bad, and be with him if he wanted her, so long as he kept the cloak from her. That's what the old woman told Anthony, and she was a skilful woman, well knowing the nature of beasts and men, and of them that's neither beasts nor men. You'll believe me now that Anthony wasn't altogether the same as other men when I tell you that he laid his mind down to get his hand down on one of the cloaks. He was a good swimmer, so he was, which is what few men on the island can do, and he knew that he'd be able to fetch out to the rock where them ones played themselves."

I was quite prepared to believe that Anthony was inspired by a passion far out of the common. I know nothing more terrifying than the chill embrace of the sea at night-time. To strike out through the slimy weeds which lie close along the surface at the ebb point of a spring tide, to clamber

on low rocks, half awash for an hour or two at midnight, these are things which I would not willingly do.

"The first time he went for to try it," said Peter, "he felt a bit queer in himself and he thought it would do him no harm if he was to bless himself. So he did, just as he was stepping off the shore into the water. Well, it might as well have been a shot he fired, for the minute he did it they were off and their cloaks along with them; and Anthony was left there. It was the sign of the cross had them frightened, for that same is what they can't stand, not having souls that religion would be any use to. It was the old woman told Anthony that after, and you'd think it would have been a warning to him not to make or meddle with the like of them any more. But it only made him the more determined. He went about without speaking to man or woman, and if anybody spoke to him he'd curse terrible, till the time of the next spring tide. Then he was off to the bay again, and sure enough them ones was there. The water was middling rough that night, but it didn't daunt Anthony. It pleased him, for he thought he'd have a better chance of getting to the rocks without them taking notice of him if there was some noise loud enough to drown the noise he'd be making himself. So he crept out to the point of the cliff on the south side of

the bay, which is as near as he could get to the rocks. You remember that?"

I did. On the night when we beat out of the bay against a rising westerly wind we went about once under the shadow of the cliff, and, almost before we had full way on the boat, stayed her again beside the rocks. Anthony's swim, though terrifying, was short.

"That time he neither blessed himself nor said a prayer, but slipped into the water, and off with him, swimming with all his strength. They didn't see him, for they were too busy with their playing to take much notice, and of course they couldn't be expecting a man to be there. Without Anthony had shouted they wouldn't have heard him, for the sea was loud on the rocks and their own singing was louder. So Anthony got there and he crept up on the rock behind them, and the first thing his hand touched was one of the cloaks. He didn't know which of them it belonged to, and he didn't care. It wasn't any one of the three in particular he wanted, for they were all much about the same to look at, only finer than any woman ever was seen. So he rolled the cloak round his neck, the way he'd have his arms free for swimming, and back with him into the water, heading for shore as fast as he was able."

"And she followed him?" I asked.

"She did so. From that day till the day she left him she followed him, and she did what she was bid, only for one thing. She wouldn't go to mass, and when the chapel bell rang she'd hide herself. The sound of it was what she couldn't bear. The people thought that queer, and there was a deal of talk about it in the island, some saying she must be a Protestant, and more thinking that she might be something worse. But nobody had a word to say against her any other way. She was a good enough housekeeper, washing and making and mending for Anthony, and minding the children. Seven of them there was, and all boys."

The easterly breeze freshened as the night fell. I could see the great eye of the lighthouse blinking at me on the weather side of the boat. It became necessary to go about, but I gave the order to Peter very reluctantly. He handled the head-sheets, and then, instead of settling down in his old place, leaned his elbows on the coaming and stared into the sea. We were steadily approaching the lighthouse. I felt that I must run the risk of asking him a question.

"What happened in the end?" I asked.

"The end, is it? Well, in the latter end she left him. But there was things happened before that. Whether it was the way the priests talked to him about her—there was a priest in it them

times that was too fond of interfering, and that's what some of them are—or whether there was goings-on within in the inside of the house that nobody knew anything about—and there might have been, for you couldn't tell what one of them ones might do or mightn't. Whatever way it was, Anthony took to drinking more than he ought. There was poteen made on the island then, and whisky was easy come by if a man wanted it, and Anthony took too much of it."

Peter paused and then passed judgment, charitably, on Anthony's conduct. "I wouldn't be too hard on a man for taking a drop an odd time."

I was glad to hear Peter say that. I myself had found it necessary from time to time, for the sake of an old friendship, not to be too hard on Peter.

"Nobody would have blamed him," Peter went on, "if he had behaved himself when he had a drop taken; but that's what he didn't seem able to do. He bet her. Sore and heavy he bet her, and that's what no woman, whether she was a natural woman or one of the other kind, could be expected to put up with. Not that she said a word. She didn't. Nor nobody would have known that he bet her if he hadn't taken to beating the young lads along with her. It was them told what was going on. But there wasn't one on the island would interfere. The people did be wondering that she

didn't put the fear of God into Anthony; but of course that's what she couldn't do on account of his having the cloak hid away from her. So long as he had that she was bound to put up with whatever he did. But it wasn't for ever.

"The house was going to rack and ruin with the way Anthony wouldn't mind it on account of his being three-parts drunk most of the time. At last the rain was coming in through the roof. When Anthony saw that he came to himself a bit and sent for my grandfather and settled with him to put a few patches of new thatch on the worst places. My grandfather was the best man at thatching that there was in the island in them days, and he took the job though he misdoubted whether he'd ever be paid for it. Anthony never came next or nigh him when he was working, which shows that he hadn't got his senses rightly. If he had he'd have kept an eye on what my grandfather was doing, knowing what he knew, though of course my grandfather didn't know. Well, one day my grandfather was dragging off the old thatch near the chimney. It was middling late in the evening, as it might be six or seven o'clock, and he was thinking of stopping his work when all of a sudden he came on what he thought might be an old petticoat bundled away in the thatch. It was red, he said, but when he put his hand on it he knew it wasn't flannel, nor it wasn't

cloth, nor it wasn't like anything he'd ever felt before in all his life. There was a hole in the roof where my grandfather had the thatch stripped, and he could see down into the kitchen. Anthony's wife was there with the youngest of the boys in her arms. My grandfather was as much in dread of her as every other one, but he thought it would be no more than civil to tell her what he'd found.

"'Begging your pardon, ma'am,' he said, 'but I'm after finding what maybe belongs to you hid away in the thatch.'

"With that he threw down the red cloak, for it was a red cloak he had in his hand. She didn't speak a word, but she laid down the baby out of her arms and she walked out of the house. That was the last my father seen of her. And that was the last anyone on the island seen of her, unless maybe Anthony. Nobody knows what he saw. He stopped off the drink from that day; but it wasn't much use his stopping it. He used to go round at spring tides to the bay where he had seen her first. He did that five times, or maybe six. After that he took to his bed and died. It could be that his heart was broke."

We slipped past the point of the pier. Peter crept forward and crouched on the deck in front of the mast. I peered into the gloom to catch sight of our mooring-buoy.

"Let her away a bit yet," said Peter. "Now luff her, luff her all you can."

The boat edged up into the wind. Peter, flat on his stomach, grasped the buoy and hauled it on board. The fore-sheets beat their tattoo on the deck. The boom swung sharply across the boat.

Ten minutes later we were leaning together across the boom gathering in the mainsail.

"What became of the boys?" I asked.

"Is it Anthony O'Flaherty's boys? The last of them went to America twenty years ago. But sure that was before you came to these parts."

XVI

AN UPRIGHT JUDGE

NO one knows how the quarrel between Peter Joyce and Patrick Joseph Flanagan began. It had been smouldering for years, a steady-going feud, before it reached its crisis last June.

The Joyces and Flanagans were neighbours, occupying farms of very poor land on the side of Letterbrack, a damp and lonely hill some miles from the nearest market town. This fact explains the persistence of the feud. It is not easy to keep up a quarrel with a man whom you only see once a month or so. Nor is it possible to concentrate the mind on one particular enemy if you live in a crowded place. Joyce and Flanagan saw each other every day. They could not help seeing each other, for their farms were small. They scarcely ever saw anyone else, because there were no other farms on the side of the hill. And the feud was a family affair. Mrs. Joyce and Mrs. Flanagan disliked each other heartily and never met without using language calculated to embitter the feeling between

them. The young Joyces and the young Flanagans fought fiercely on their way to and from school.

The war, which has turned Europe upside down and dragged most things from their familiar moorings, had its effect on the lives of the two farmers on the side of Letterbrack. They became better off than they had ever been before. It must not be supposed that they grew rich. According to the standard of English working men they had always been wretchedly poor. All that the war did for them was to put a little, a very little, more money into their pockets. They themselves did not connect their new prosperity with the war. They did not, indeed, think about the war at all, being fully occupied with their work and their private quarrel. They noticed, without inquiring into causes, that the prices of the things they sold went up steadily. A lean bullock fetched an amazing sum at a fair. Young pigs proved unexpectedly profitable. The eggs which the women carried into town on market days could be exchanged for unusual quantities of tea. And the rise in prices was almost pure gain to these farmers. They lived for the most part on the produce of their own land and bought very little in shops. There came a time when Peter Joyce had a comfortable sum, about £20 in all, laid by after making provision for his

rent and taxes. He felt entitled to some little indulgence.

An Englishman, when he finds himself in possession of spare cash spends it on material luxuries for himself and, if he is a good man, for his family. He buys better food, better clothes, and furniture of a kind not absolutely necessary, like pianos. An Irishman, in a similar agreeable position, prefers pleasures of a more spiritual kind. Peter Joyce was perfectly content to wear a "bawneen" of home-made flannel and a pair of ragged trousers. He did not want anything better for dinner than boiled potatoes and fried slices of bacon. He had not the smallest desire to possess a piano or even an arm-chair. But he intended, in his own way, to get solid enjoyment out of his £20.

It was after the children had gone to bed one evening that he discussed the matter with his wife.

"I'm not sure," he said, "but it might be as well to settle things up one way or another with that old reprobate Patrick Joseph Flanagan. It's what I'll have to do sooner or later."

"Them Flanagans," said Mrs. Joyce, "is the devil. There isn't a day passes but one or other of them has me tormented. If it isn't her it's one of the children, and if, by the grace of God, it isn't the children it's herself."

"What I'm thinking of," said Joyce, "is taking the law of him."

"It'll cost you something to do that," said Mrs. Joyce cautiously.

"And if it does, what matter? Haven't I the money to pay for it?"

"You have," said Mrs. Joyce. "You have surely. And Flanagan deserves it, so he does. It's not once nor twice, but it's every day I do be saying there's something should be done to them Flanagans."

"There's more will be done to him than he cares for," said Joyce grimly. "Wait till the County Court Judge gets at him. Believe me he'll be sorry for himself then."

Peter Joyce started early next morning. He had an eight-mile walk before him and he wished to reach the town in good time, being anxious to put his case into the hands of Mr. Madden, the solicitor, before Mr. Madden became absorbed in the business of the day. Mr. Madden had the reputation of being the smartest lawyer in Connaught, and his time was very fully occupied.

It took Joyce nearly three hours to reach the town and he had ample time to prepare his case against Flanagan as he went. There was no lack of material for the lawsuit. A feud of years' standing provides many grievances which can fairly be

brought into court. Joyce's difficulty was to make a choice. He pondered deeply as he walked along the bare road across the bog. When he reached the door of Mr. Madden's office he had a tale of injuries suffered at the hands of the Flanagans which would, he felt sure, move the judge to vindictive fury.

Mr. Madden was already busy when Joyce was shown unto his room.

"Well," he said, "who are you and what do you want?"

"My name's Peter Joyce of Letterbrack, your honour," said Joyce. "A decent man with a long weak family, and my father was a decent man before me, and it's no fault of mine that I'm here to-day, and going into court, though there isn't another gentleman in all Ireland I'd sooner come to than yourself, Mr. Madden, if so be I had to come to anyone. And it's what I'm druv to, for if I wasn't——"

"What is it?" said Mr. Madden. "Police? Drunk and disorderly?"

"It is not," said Joyce. "Sure I never was took by the police only twice, and them times they wouldn't have meddled with me only for the spite the sergeant had against me. But he's gone from the place now, thanks be to God, and the one that came after him wouldn't touch me."

Peter Joyce sank his voice to a whisper.

"It's how I want to take the law of Patrick Joseph Flanagan," he said.

"Trespass or assault?" said Mr. Madden.

He was a man of immense experience. He succeeded in carrying on a large practice because he wasted no time in listening to preliminary explanations of his clients. Most legal actions in the West of Ireland are reducible to trespass or assault.

"It's both the two of them," said Joyce.

Mr. Madden made a note on a sheet of paper before him. Joyce waited until he had finished writing. Then he said slowly:

"Trespass and assault and more besides."

Mr. Madden asked no question. He added to the note he had written the words "And abusive language." Abusive language generally follows trespass and immediately precedes assault.

"Now," said Mr. Madden, "get on with your story and make it as short as you can."

Peter Joyce did his best to make the story short. He succeeded in making it immensely complicated. There was a boundary wall in the story and it had been broken down. There was a heifer calf and a number of young pigs. There was a field of oats trampled and destroyed by the heifer, and a potato patch ruined beyond hope by the pigs. There was a sheep torn by a dog, stones thrown at Mrs. Joyce,

language that had defiled the ears of Molly Joyce, an innocent child of twelve years old, and there was the shooting of a gun at Peter himself.

Joyce was prepared to swear to every item of the indictment. He did actually swear from time to time, laying his hand solemnly on a large ledger which stood on Mr. Madden's desk. Mr. Madden listened until he had heard enough.

"You haven't a ghost of a case against Flanagan," he said. "The judge won't listen to a story like that. If you take my advice you'll go straight home and make it up with Flanagan. You'll simply waste your money if you go into court."

Mr. Madden, it will be seen, was a man of principle. He made his living out of other people's quarrels, but he gave honest advice to his clients. He was also a man of wide knowledge of West of Ireland farmers. He knew perfectly well that his advice would not be taken.

"I've the money to pay for it," said Joyce, "and I'll have the law of Patrick Joseph Flanagan if it costs me the last penny I own. If your honour doesn't like the case sure I can go to someone else."

Mr. Madden, though a man of principle, was not quixotic.

"Very well," he said. "I'll manage your case for you; but I warn you fairly the judge will give it against you."

"He might not," said Joyce. "In the latter end he might not."

"He will," said Mr. Madden, "unless——"

He was watching Joyce carefully as he spoke. The man's face had an expression of cunning and self-satisfaction.

"Unless," Mr. Madden went on, "you've something up your sleeve that you haven't told me yet."

Joyce winked solemnly.

"It's what it would be hardly worth mentioning to your honour," he said.

"You'd better mention it all the same," said Mr. Madden.

"What I was thinking," said Joyce, "is that if I was to send a pair of ducks to the judge a couple of days before the case was to come on—fine ducks we have, as fine as ever was seen."

"Listen to me," said Mr. Madden. "You've got the very smallest possible chance of winning your case. But you have a chance. It's a hundred to one against you. Still, odd things do happen in courts. But let me tell you this. I know that judge. I've known him for years, and if you try to bribe him with a pair of ducks he'd give it against you even if you had the best case in the world instead of the worst. That's the kind of man he is."

Joyce sighed heavily. The ways of the law were proving unexpectedly difficult and expensive.

"Maybe," he said, "I could send him two pair of ducks, or two pair and a half, but that's the most I can do; and there won't be a young duck left about the place if I send him that many."

"Either you act by my advice," said Mr. Madden, "or I'll drop your case. This isn't a matter for the local bench of magistrates. If it was them you were dealing with, ducks might be some use to you. But a County Court Judge is a different kind of man altogether. He's a gentleman, and he's honest. If you attempt to get at him with ducks or any other kind of bribe you'll ruin any chance you have, which isn't much."

"That's a queer thing now, so it is," said Joyce.

"It's true all the same," said Mr. Madden.

"Do you mean to tell me," said Joyce, "that his honour, the judge, would go against a man that had done him a good turn in the way of a pair of ducks or the like?"

"That's exactly what I do mean," said Mr. Madden. "No judge would stand it. And the one who presides over this court would be even angrier than most of them, so don't you do it."

Joyce left Mr. Madden's office a few minutes later, and tramped home. In spite of the lawyer's

discouraging view of the case he seemed fairly well satisfied.

That evening he spoke to his wife.

"How many of them large white ducks have you?" he asked; "how many that's fit to eat?"

"There's no more than six left out of the first clutch," said Mrs. Joyce. "There was eleven hatched out, but sure the rats got the rest of them."

"I'd be glad," said Joyce, "if you'd fatten them six, and you needn't spare the yellow meal. It'll be worth your while to have them as good as you can."

A month later the case of Joyce *v.* Flanagan came on in the County Court. Mr. Madden had hammered the original story of the wall, the heifer, the pigs and the potatoes, into shape. It sounded almost plausible as Mr. Madden told it in his opening remarks. But he had very little hopes that it would survive the handling of Mr. Ellis, a young and intelligent lawyer, who was acting for Flanagan. Joyce cheerfully confirmed every detail of the story on oath. He was unshaken by Mr. Ellis' cross-examination, chiefly because the judge constantly interfered with Mr. Ellis and would not allow him to ask the questions he wanted to ask. Flanagan and his witnesses did their best, but the judge continued to make things as difficult as he could for their lawyer. The matter, when all the

evidence was heard, appeared tangled and confused, a result far beyond Mr. Madden's best expectations. He had feared that the truth might emerge with disconcerting plainness. Then an amazing thing happened. The judge took Joyce's view of the circumstances and decided in his favour. Mr. Ellis gasped. Flanagan swore audibly and was silenced by a policeman. Joyce left the court with a satisfied smile.

"Well," said Mr. Madden, a little later, "you've won, but I'm damned if I know how it happened. I never went into court with a shakier case."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Joyce, "but it might have been the ducks that did it. I sent him six, your honour, six, and as fat as any duck ever you seen."

"Good Lord!" said Mr. Madden. "After all I said to you—and—but, good heavens, man! He can't have got them. If he had——"

"He got them right enough," said Joyce, "for I left them at the door of the hotel myself, with a bit of a note, saying as how I hoped he'd take a favourable view of the case that would be before him to-day, and I told him what the case was, so as there'd be no mistake—Joyce *v.* Flanagan was what I wrote, in a matter of trespass and assault, and abusive language."

"Well," said Mr. Madden, "all I can say is that

if I hadn't seen with my own eyes what happened in that court to-day I wouldn't have believed it. To think that the judge, of all men——"

"It was Flanagan's name and not my own," said Joyce, "that I signed at the bottom of the note. 'With the respectful compliments of Patrick Joseph Flanagan, the defendant,' was what I wrote, like as if it was from him that the ducks came."

"I'd never have thought of it," said Mr. Madden. "Joyce, it's you and not me that ought to be a lawyer. Lawyer! That's nothing. You ought to be a Member of Parliament. Your talents are wasted, Joyce. Go into Parliament. You'll be a Cabinet Minister before you die."

THE END

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